



## Poem number 124

*Visualizing the material folds and sacred spaces in Emily Dickinson's poem through  
printmaking*

by

Jane Slade

Tasmanian College of the Arts

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the MFA

University of Tasmania May, 2017

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers (124)

BY EMILY DICKINSON

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers -

Untouched by Morning -

and untouched by noon -

Sleep the meek members of the Resurrection,

Rafter of Satin and Roof of Stone -

Grand go the Years,

In the Crescent above them -

Worlds scoop their Arcs -

and Firmaments - row -

Diadems - drop -

And Doges surrender -

Soundless as Dots,

On a Disk of Snow

*The Poems of Emily Dickinson, edited by R.W. Franklin* (Harvard University Press, 1999), Access 23/03/2017

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45719>

## Introduction

The research discussed in this exegesis outlines the development of a visual language to evoke the experience of the sacred space as expressed through the nineteenth century poet Emily Dickinson, particularly her poem number one hundred and twenty four, *Safe in their Alabaster Chambers*<sup>1</sup>. I propose that this poem refers to a fluid space where the imaginings of the soul and the body co-exist and is an expression of Dickinson's ambivalence towards religion and its framing of mortality (L. Freedman 2011, p. 1). I suggest that Dickinson used poetry to grapple with the space between the material and the spiritual worlds. In order to make visual my concerns I propose a re-reading of the poem and re-working of the poet's modus operandi, through my print practice. Rather than illustrating Dickinson's poem in a literal way, my work seeks to evoke the conflicted feelings aroused by Dickinson as she seeks to express her relationship with religion and negotiate the expectations of her gender (Freedman 2011, p. 3). My perspective employs a feminine lens through which I contribute to the work of other women artists who have grappled with the idea of spirituality and pushed against the confines of religious belief. I work with the concept of the sacred space, particularly absent for women in religious iconography, making a further contribution to the challenge of how to make the 'invisible' visible.

Printmaking, with its traditional links to religious texts and imagery, is a particularly appropriate medium to explore the sacred. The two print techniques I have employed are stone lithography and mono printing. Stone lithography allowed me to facilitate a unique series of prints through drawing directly onto the stone where deletions and over printing meant each print has a unique state. Mono printing has been especially appropriate, as it has allowed for the layering of inks, stencils and textures to create a series of prints to invoke the two stanzas of the poem.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Page 1 for print version of the poem, 124, *Safe in their Alabaster Chambers*

Layering techniques have been used with subtle tones and textures to suggest the invisibility of the sacred space. The issues pertaining to the poem and my visual explorations are the subjects of the following chapters.

This exegesis is set out in three chapters. In Chapter One I discuss my concerns with religious belief as expressed through the words of Julia Kristeva, 'This incredible need to believe' (2009, pp. 3 -12). Kristeva's words are complicit with my intentions to re-fold back to the nineteenth century to engage with the poet and the poem as a foil for my concerns. This is manifest in the re-folding of roles between Dickinson and myself as the poet expresses her concerns related to mortality and religion through her poetry and I re-imagine these through my visual language. To develop this, I delve into how the poetry reflects her ideas, both in language and structure. Dickinson used syntactic devices, such as dashes between words and phrases to denote the 'inexplicable' problem of mortality and the soul. She structured her poem into stanzas, the first of which can be seen to evoke the material world while the second is suggestive of the infinite realm of the spirit, whilst maintaining fluidity between the two realms. Gilles Deleuze's concept of the Fold is introduced as a way of conceptualizing this relationship between the two realms. I argue that there is a connection between the structure of the poem and Deleuze's idea of the two levels of the Baroque House, where one level is for the body and one for the soul, with movement between the two levels (G. Deleuze 1993, pp. 4, 5 & 100 -107).

In Chapter Two the idea of the sacred space, and mortality is developed and contextualized through a number of artists. As I have proposed to view the sacred space through a feminine lens, I have researched women artists who have either employed Dickinson's poetry in their practice or who have found new ways of visualizing the invisible realm of the 'sacred'. Three contemporary artists who have taken Dickinson and her poetry to

focus on spirituality and language are Kiki Smith (1954 -) who has recently collected and illustrated a limited edition book of Dickinson's poems, called *Sampler* (Arion Press), employing the skills of embroidery artisans; Lesley Dill (1955 -) who has referenced Dickinson through her dramatic and large-scale installations and Roni Horn (1955 -) a contemporary American artist who has found an affinity with Dickinson through 'place' and the syntactic devices she employed in the poems. Horn became especially pertinent to this investigation as she took Dickinson's poetic structure and sought to express this through spatial configurations of the components of her work. Twentieth century artists whose works have been referenced for their explorations of the intangible world of spirituality are Mira Schendel's transparent mono prints, and Agnes Martin's translucent pastel hued paintings as an expression of 'nothingness'. This chapter concludes with a discussion of Tacita Dean's installation in the church tower, now art gallery, St Agnes in Berlin. How these artists have influenced the methodologies of my art practice is discussed in detail throughout Chapter Two.

All the artists I discuss are women except for Fra Angelico from the mid fourteenth century. The art critic Georges Didi-Huberman's interpretation of Fra Angelico's fresco, with specific focus on the four panels under the main fresco, has been influential in bringing new understanding to the disruptions in my work. The magnificent fresco *Madonna of the Shadows* (1450) will be discussed in the final chapter.

The methodologies employed throughout the investigation and subsequent influences are the subject of the third chapter, *Modus operandi*. An engagement with New Materialism has been central to making sense of the methodologies I employed for the investigation, especially Karen Barad's theory of 'hauntologies'. Barad's proposals have been integral to framing the processes I employed and combined with serendipitous events, interacted to bring about new possibilities in

understanding and making. There have been fortuitous discoveries that have led me to bring a sense of Dickinson's manner of working – discoveries where there was a need to let go of the materials and the medium to allow the intra-action of events to bring new understanding between the maker and her materials and the poet and her poem. This has led to the exploration of how to image the text as an absence and has encouraged new insights and questioning of my own practice.

## CHAPTER 1

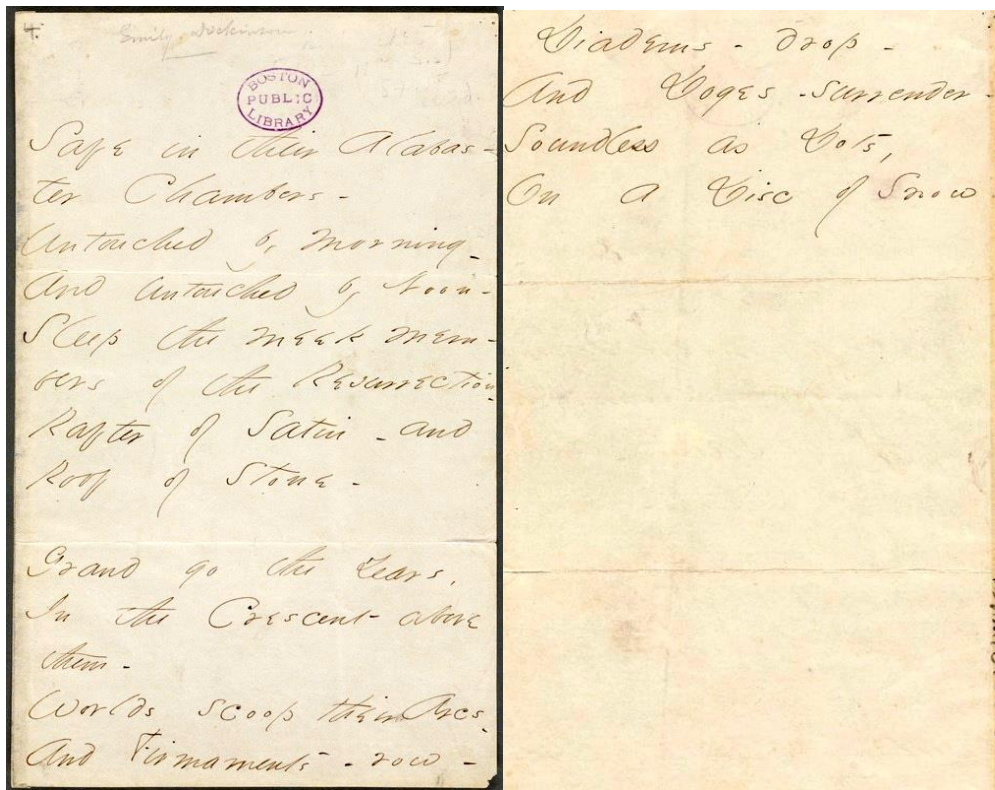


Fig. 1  
Emily Dickinson, *Safe in their Alabaster Chambers*, 1859

This chapter discusses the inspiration I gained from Dickinson who found in her domestic interior the sacred space where she was able to write about real and imagined worlds. My intention has been to explore Dickinson's poem, reviving it from the dusty shelves of yesteryear. I propose that the poet recognized the constraints of her domestic realm but at the same time, found the sacred space where she could write unconstrained by gender, time and space. In this context I employ Deleuze's concept of the Baroque fold to visualize such a space, which hovers between the material and the spiritual, just as the language of the poem hovers between matter and the soul. Deleuze's conception of the fold allows it to be used as a visual tool denoting the fluidity of matter, and the ephemeral state of the 'soul' or 'spirit' and can reference a space where the earthly and the sacred co-exist in a state of suspension (Deleuze 1993, pp. 3-11).

## **Safe Keeper**

There are several reasons for choosing Dickinson and her poem. The poet and her poem provided a vehicle to explore my own concerns about religion and mortality. I often use literary sources in the form of poems, nursery rhymes and female fictional and historical characters in my visual work. They are like 'safe keepers' for stories and secrets, and as a method to contain the 'inexplicable' or embody the 'unnarratable'. Often too I have returned to the past, especially the nineteenth century as often the past makes sense of the present. I am not looking for a mirror image of myself through Dickinson, but rather trying to visualize the invisible spaces that Dickinson's poem conjures in my imagination. Dickinson, quietly ambivalent about religion and the expectations of her gender, expressed her concerns through her poetry, as I express mine through my visual language. Time marches forward like the rhythm of the poem; yet time is not linear. Like the poem time is constantly interrupted, often blurring the space between the past and the present. I am like the meek members, oblivious to the rhythm of daily life. Do I have a choice between turning back or do I continue with my journey?

Underpinning this visual exploration are my concerns with how religion and mortality, even in a mostly secular society can impact on our daily lives. The paradox of Christian religion is the belief or myth that we can transcend our physical qualities through the religious experience in an attempt to allay a fear of death through the potential immortality of the soul. Religion teaches us that understanding is not necessary, but belief is paramount, yet that is often not enough, and it is this hovering between religious belief and something intangible or invisible that I perceived in Dickinson's poem. Julia Kristeva declares 'this incredible need to believe' is a necessary paradox that responds to an anthropological need, which continues to be a source of anxiety and analysis (2009, pp. 3 -12). The need for physical and emotional reassurance through the comforting concept of an afterlife is the narrative that dominates Christian belief. It is



this need to believe that brings families, communities, cultures and countries together, and pulls them apart, often portraying alternative beliefs as 'the other'. This investigation does not attempt to address the issues pertaining to Christian belief but rather develop a visual language for exploring the sacred through the conflicted feelings evoked through Dickinson's poem. Dickinson's ambivalence to religion and the expectations of her gender saw her turn away from the outside world and formal (Christian) religious belief to enclose herself within her domestic realm, finding her sacred space through her cloistered existence to write her poetry (Freedman 2011, p. 1, Howe 2007, p. 13).

### **My Emily Dickinson**

Contemporary American poet and historian, Susan Howe places Dickinson's poetry among the most innovative of her time (2007, p. 11). She finds that Dickinson's resistance to conform to social norms gave her the freedom to write and cultivate her unique voice although she was educated within the confines allowed to middle-class women in the nineteenth century (Howe 2007, p. 21). Dickinson was curious and she had an extensive library in her family home, from where she could explore the new world; she was not completely trapped by her confines, as was the madwoman in the attic -- a common fictional trope in nineteenth century literature<sup>2</sup>. Slipping between the cracks of the social norms of her time, she found an escape through the sacred space of her *Alabaster Chambers* where she could dream and write letters and poetry to family, friends and lovers, real and imagined. Dickinson was able to express the 'inexplicable' issues of her gender through her poetry, but remained secretive, allowing only few family and friends to read her poems.

---

<sup>2</sup> E. Weinberger in his introduction to S. Howe *My Emily Dickinson* argues that 'Dickinson had become the 'reductive portrait of a spinster genius' and was, in the title of a popular feminist critique, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, driven there by the society-at-large, inhabiting the only space allowed an intelligent and sensitive woman (Weinberger, E. 1995, p. x., *My Emily Dickinson*).

Dickinson's secretive nature has influenced my feminine perspective as I focus my investigation on the idea of the sacred space. She uses words and spaces as a form of veiling, which I have aimed to bring to my own investigations and print images. Using her idea of the cloistered or closed space for the mortal body as read in the first stanza of the poem and the infinite space of the worlds and soul in the second stanza, has brought me to investigate the idea of the sacred space as being both visible and invisible. Drawing inspiration from the poet and her poem has resulted in a body of work where I have explored transparency through layering stenciled shapes and colours traditionally associated with femininity. Folding between the layers are nuances pertaining to unspoken tensions.

There are two known versions of the second stanza. I have chosen the second version that Dickinson wrote in 1861. The hand written version of this poem was placed with other poems into a folder, hand-stitched and bundled into fascicles<sup>3</sup>, which were found in an attic after her death<sup>4</sup>. Both versions of this poem were sent in letters to her confidante and sister-in-law Susan Gilbert Dickinson although they lived next door to each other (Freedman 2011, p. 165). This poem was part of an intimate exchange between the two friends whose female voices were inaudible within and outside the walls of their homes, whose lives were isolated and isolating. Both women, though well educated in keeping with nineteenth century enlightenment and the Anglo American dream, had to adhere to the pervasive rules that were expected for the daughters, sisters and wives of the growing middle classes (Howe 2007, p. 13).

---

<sup>3</sup>Definition of fascicle

1: a small or slender bundle (as of pine needles or nerve fibres)

2: one of the divisions of a book published in parts.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fascicle>

The first stanza remains the same in both versions of the poem except for the interchanging two words *sleep* and *lie*. Sleep alludes to the suspension of time through rest and rejuvenation for the body and soul, whereas *lie* suggests the body is inert, lifeless, the soul is absent. Although *lie* was substituted in the second version there is still some conjecture as to why Dickinson changed the words. The poet looks inwards; her voice is inaudible through the stone-wall of the alabaster chamber. It is she who is the 'meek member(s)'. The poet oscillates between 'sleep' and 'lie' as she alludes to the suspension of time through the words 'untouched' by 'Morning' and 'Noon'. Tension is created between through the *meek member(s)*, passively awaiting a promise of redemption whilst her restless soul is like the ideas of the soul seeking out the unknown. The second stanza in both versions moves away from the cloistered space into the external world. The first version is lighter, more literal, as it refers to the ignorant bliss of the seasons, with the laughing breeze carelessly sweeping along the birds and bees, which undaunted keep singing their songs of praise until they too succumb to mortality.

Light laughs the breeze  
In her Castle above them –  
Babbles the bee in a stolid Ear,  
Pipe the Sweet Birds in ignorance cadence –  
Ah, what sagacity perished here! (1859)<sup>5</sup>

However, the second version, that I have chosen, describes the timeless and infinite worlds of her imagination<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> H Vendler cites three versions of the second version (2010, 38 – 42)

<sup>6</sup> See page one, for the printed version of the poem, taken from the book of Dickinson's poetry, edited by RW Franklin (1998).

The fluid soul, like the fold, folds through the space of the *Alabaster Chambers* searching for the allusive grandeur of history in 'Grand go the years'. The Crescent folding through infinity infers the soul transcending the material world, while the body remains wrapped in satin folds safe within the walls of the *Alabaster Chambers*. The silence of Chambers in the first stanza and the light of the worlds are doubled as the dash marks the space. There is the promise of the afterlife as the body remains within the chambers while the soul journeys through the arcs of the unknown worlds.

Dickinson is also suggesting the sacred space, which defies the restraints of real time through the 'firmaments – row'. Firmament is the imaginary arc of heaven. Dickinson's plural firmaments, alludes to more than one sphere of heaven. Perhaps she is referring to the sacred space between the materiality of her earthly sphere and the allusive firmaments, as Deleuze refers to the invisible space between the material folds.

There is an echo of the futility of earthly pursuits, as the *Diadems* and *Doges*, the kings (or queens), clergy and those with authority, must surrender their earthly goods and status, as we are all mortal. *Diadems* indicate earthly matter through the bejeweled crowns often worn by brides and royalty, whilst the spaces between the dashes suggest there is something else. This I suggest is the sacred space, where worldly titles and matter are in free-fall (Freedman 2011, 164-166) - where they are merely 'soundless dots – on a disc of snow'. The dots of snow are the colours of the doges' crowns, when melted, creating a shimmering light as the 'dots a disc of snow!' Thus the melting snow can allude to the fragility of the colours in the rainbow.

According to Camille Paglia the brilliant colours of the *doges'* crowns dissolve with the falling snowflakes, as a 'soft numbing', a spluttering silence (1990, p. 656). This magnificent vision of all the wealth and wonder of the universe dissolving with *the Soundless Dots of Snow* has inspired me to re-work my own palette and informs a major part of the final chapter, Modus Operandi. The dots of snow echo the folds of time, through the space between the two stanzas of the poem.

## The Fold

Co-incidentally I began to read Dickinson's poetry and the twentieth century French philosopher Deleuze's *The Fold* at the same time. It was through the material and sacred spaces that Dickinson alluded to in the poem *Alabaster Chambers*, where I found an allegory for Deleuze's fold. Deleuze, according to Tom Conley<sup>7</sup>, proposes an intimate and personal interpretation of Baroque fold. Here the curves and twists of the materiality of the fold allows for the unfolding of different points of view, which manifest through the movements of modern art and poetry (T. Conley ed. 1993, pp x-xiii). Deleuze demonstrates this through his description of the Baroque house as a montage of two levels where the lower level is imbued with matter including the body, whilst the upper floor refers to the realm of the spirit through folds, which float endlessly between both levels. Through the metaphor of the fold Deleuze also suggests these two realms are never entirely separate but a tension exists as the folds float endlessly between the body and the soul (Deleuze, 1993 pp. 5-11). The folds, folding into one another are both organic and inorganic; they are both matter and the soul.

---

<sup>7</sup> Tom Conley is the English translator who also writes the Forward for Gilles Deleuze *The Fold*.

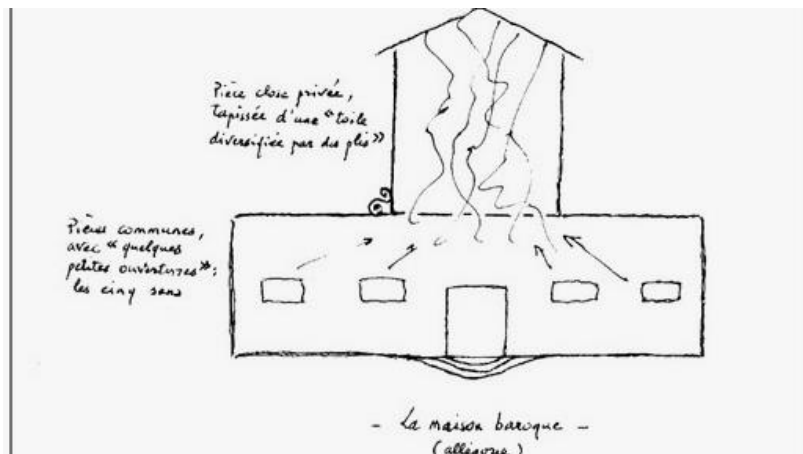


Fig. 2  
The Baroque House  
(an allegory) G. Deleuze,  
1993 p. 5

I propose to take Deleuze's interpretation of the Fold as it pertains to both the material space of Dickinson's *Alabaster Chambers* in the first stanza and the imaginary timeless space echoed through the *Arcs of the Worlds* in the second stanza. The fluidity of folds and the imagination of the soul is what connects both stanzas. I have taken Deleuze's folds of the soul as a metaphor for the idea of the sacred space, with its religious connotations, as a way of unraveling Dickinson's poem and my own concerns with religion and mortality. Deleuze's fold allows for a way of rethinking of Dickinson's poem through exploring tangible ways of visualizing the invisibility of the soul and the sacred space through printmaking. Contemporary theorist Karen Barad engages folds as a way of rethinking older texts and re-imagining the past. Barad's idea of folds are imbued through her idea of 'hauntologies' (K. Barad 2010).

Barad also invites her reader to experience a way of rethinking through dis/continuity or dis/orientation; a re-fracturing of events through 'imaginary time / experimental time / now / before / to come ... time', a folding and re-folding of time. Barad proposes time as "non-linear" where events real and imagined are enfolded through the past and present to a

future that is always out of reach and is not what will unfold (Barad 2010, pp. 240 & 243, van der Tuin 2014, p. 55 & 66). The structure of the poem reflects a re-fracturing of events between the first and second stanzas, where the body remains meek to the ravages of time while the timeless soul moves through the grandeur of the years.

The poem structured into two stanzas<sup>8</sup> is much like Deleuze's imaginary Baroque house, where the ideas of the soul seep through the material folds floating between the two floors. The first stanza with its satin rafter, stone and alabaster, references an earthly chamber, a cloistered space<sup>9</sup>, much like Deleuze's lower floor, which is filled with the senses of mortality. An internal room or space that is protected and protective and where the senses are heightened in meditative contemplation is known in Italian as a "stanze" (Spector 1994, p. 63)<sup>10</sup>. Dickinson's poem invokes the idea of this material and meditative space. While there is a separation between the cloister as the space for the mortal body and the worlds of her imagination, there is fluidity. Dickinson's chambers are her gateway into the imaginative worlds of the universe where the soul is not constrained by materiality but roams through the timeless universe, as insignificant as the dots of snow. The second stanza takes us away from the internal room to the crescents hovering above the arcs of the worlds, where the ambiguity of the folds of the time are inferred by the *firmaments* – row – Dickinson suggests mythic and imaginary time through her poem, her words are folds within a fold.

---

<sup>8</sup> Stanza: a fixed number of verse lines arranged in a definite metrical pattern, forming a unit of a poem. From the Italian: halting place from Vulgar Latin *stantia* or *stanze* (unattested) station from Latin *stare* to stand. (Collins English Dictionary 1987, p. 1487)

<sup>9</sup> The cloister – an image from religious iconography -- is a sacred space that can be both real and imagined.

<sup>10</sup> Spector invokes deeper meaning from the Italian translation discussed in reference to Roni Horn's aluminum columns (1994, pp 26 – 28)

## Dashes

There is a further reference to the folds through Dickinson's unusual grammatical dashes, which she uses to mark a space, whilst at the same time marking a disruption to the rhythmic flow of the poem. Howe states that Dickinson used the page as a canvas or conceptual space like an artist. She argues the poet intended the visual shape of the text to reflect the movement or rhythm of the poem. The dashes and seemingly unpredictable stops and starts that Dickinson employed in her poems were also deliberate: unsettling, jarring upsetting the rhythmic flow of the words. Yet when the poems were printed, or as Howe suggests 'manhandled into print', the original visual form of the writing was lost. Dickinson's poems were reformatted to fit neatly into an acceptable grammar and a familiar printed format so the poetry could be easily read. Howe asserts this was most likely not the intention of the poet as she was attracted by the subversions of life, which constantly influenced her poetry. I agree with Howe and propose that her poems go beyond the material constraints of the paper as the fold goes beyond its material properties (Howe 2007, p. 11, F. Gelpi 2008, p. 102).

The dash echoes the fold as it marks the space between language as having a physical presence and absence. Thus Dickinson was able to invoke a tension between matter and something that is absent or unknown, which I refer to as the sacred space. The dashes mark the space between matter and the folds of the soul; they are like small stanze, a pause, a breath between the words and the lines. Like the fold of the fold, the dashes are silent threads that weave spaces through the meaning of the poem, as in her original writing the dash varied in length,<sup>11</sup> indicating her understanding of the importance of space<sup>12</sup>. It is as if she inserted the

---

<sup>11</sup> T. H. Johnson suggests she used them as a musical device (T. H. Johnson, 1975, x).

<sup>12</sup> After Dickinson's death, for purposes of publication, the dash, like her jarring poetic rhythm was formatted to comply with printing practices and the acceptable rules of poetry.



dash as a device to suggest something unspoken and unknown, something mystical or sacred. The dash is a device, an echo of the silence in the line – *soundless as the falling dots of snow* –

Through this project I have sought to develop a body of work that shows how the poet found her voice, although inaudible to the outside world at the time, by using her own devices. Howe understands that Dickinson, like most educated women of her time was eternally on the edge of ‘intellectual borders,’ listening to but not engaging with the confident ‘masculine voices that buzzed with alluring and inaccessible discourse’ (1985, p. 21). Dickinson, therefore, found other materials and modes of expression. I am proposing the poet recognized the constraints of her domestic realm but at the same time found the sacred space where she could write unconstrained by gender, time and space. This was *her* sacred space.

The aim of this investigation is to contribute to the challenge of how to make the invisible visible through the idea of the sacred space through my print practice.

### **Envelopes, Fascicles and Pressed Flowers**

Dickinson often used discarded envelopes for writing her ideas and as a way of experimenting with space. She flattened the envelopes where the folds and creases became ready-made visual spaces, which the poet was able to utilize.

Initially I surmised it was economy that brought the poet to experiment with the space and form of the envelope, but then they became complex constellations of her imaginative ideas that can now be traced to later manuscripts of her poetry and writing (J. Bervin 2013, pp. 10 & 11, Howe

1995, p. 13). In this sense the envelopes were easily accessible and they could be secretly stashed in the pockets of her dress or hidden in drawers. As an archival reference the envelopes were carriers for often hidden or secret messages. Whilst many had the names of the intended recipient and sender they also infer a sense of loss as the letters that were folded and pressed inside the envelope, are absent. However, what remained was the trace of something past and the poet's ideas. I imagine the folded envelopes may have contained a lover's letter, poetry, pressed flowers and news of life and death. They were the material folds for carrying secret correspondence. When flattened they became material vessels for Dickinson's ideas, which she then placed in her secret and sacred places.

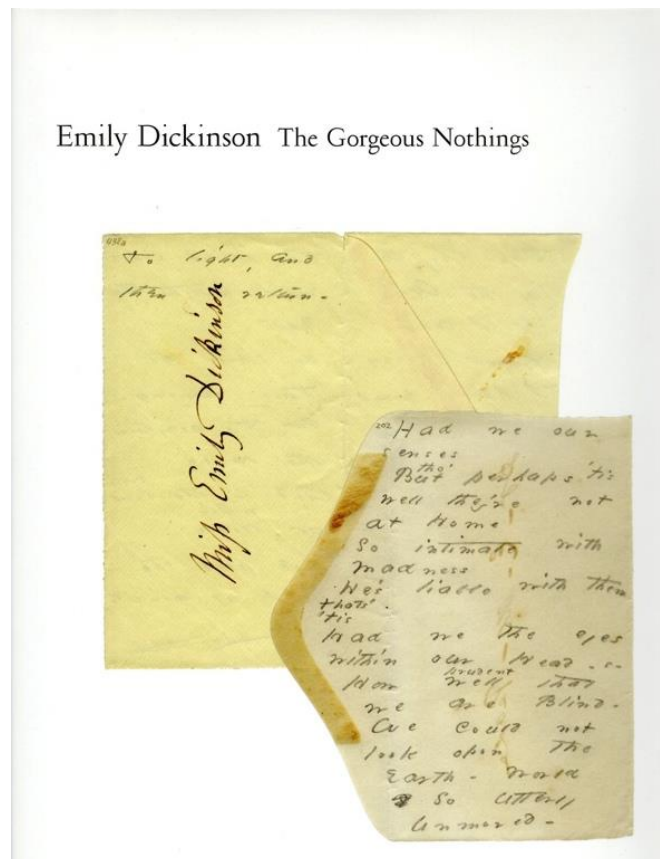


Fig. 3

Dickinson's modus operandi included methods of binding her finished poems into fascicles,<sup>13</sup> which remained hidden from her family and friends until after her death. Like the envelopes they became portals for her poetic ideas. As bound clusters the fascicles can be an allegory for the material folds and her poetry the folds of the ideas of the soul. The fascicles have inadvertently caused a revolution in how I approach process as an integral part of my printmaking practice. Gathering together the disparate parts of my investigation I realized I had inadvertently echoed the poet's penchant for sewing her poems together, in a seemingly random manner. For example, used Japanese paper stencils have been dried, stitched into small groups and hung on 'found' guitar wire, and torn prints have been stacked and flattened under 'alabaster' tiles. Like the fascicles, these belong to the process of my printmaking, but are also an integral part of the endeavor.

There is another area of the poet's modus operandi that I inadvertently came to echo through her collection of pressed dried flowers. As was popular at the time the pressed flowers were made into a book form known as a Herbarium. The dried flowers pressed between the pages of books are a form of visual writing as they preserve the past, through the fragile folding of the leaves and petals as they float precariously on the surface of the paper - a visual echo of language. So too the words from the poem float on the surface of the paper, suggesting a fragility of another kind. The leaves of the flowers mimic the flattened folds of satin, whilst their faded colours echo the absence suggested by the dash and the spaces between. The poet found and used familiar things to use for her creative endeavors.

---

<sup>13</sup> Definition of FASCICLE

A small or slender bundle.

One of the divisions of a book published in parts

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fascicle>, viewed 17/02/2017

## Sacred Space

Iris van der Tuin says the artist's studio is a sacred space where creative activity can lead to new discoveries (Barrett & Bolt eds. 2014, p. 261). I found Dickinson has been the conduit in activating and reinforcing new discoveries throughout the project. She created spaces -- real and imagined -- and I began to echo her secretive life, as I too became enclosed in my studio space. It was as if we shared a whispered secret that folded through past into the present. As I became immersed in the poem it became like an unresolved message, mysterious, suspenseful and suspended, at times obscuring reality and time. I too became enfolded within Dickinson's imaginary chambers, at times immersed in the poem -- like the *meek members* on the *rafter of satin* under the *roof of stone*. This poem has allowed me to rethink what I thought was 'impossible' -- that is to visualize the idea of the 'invisible' sacred space. Deleuze's concept of the fold and Barad's suggestion of the enfolding of time through 'hauntologies' have provided me with the material means to unravel Dickinson's poetic language and her *modus operandi*. Visualizing the interchanging spaces of the poem through my printmaking practice has challenged me throughout this investigation. In Chapter Two I investigate other artists and how they have dealt with the idea of time and space, physical and 'sacred' and their influence on my work while in Chapter Three I explore how I have sought to resolve these issues through my studio practice.

## CHAPTER 2

It is commonplace to assume that religion and avant-garde art are by definition adversaries. But in fact, far from being irrelevant or antithetical to advanced art, religion has been a powerful source of artistic inspiration for many contemporary artists.

(Eleanor Heartney, 2003, p. 3)

Eleanor Heartney proposes that religion continues to inform creative practice as a relevant and inspirational source in today's secular (western) society. Through her discussion of the work of contemporary female artists Heartney finds their imaginative approach can inform new perspectives on femininity and the nature of religious belief.

Heartney's proposal sets the framework for this chapter, which discusses six contemporary and recent female artists who seek to express the spiritual through material means in their artwork. Three of these artists have used the poetics of Emily Dickinson to explore issues of femininity, identity and language – namely Kiki Smith (1954- ), Lesley Dill (1950- ) and Roni Horn (1955- ). While these artists have invested Dickinson's poetics with their own feminine responses to spirituality, it is Horn, in particular who has provided a spatial realization of Dickinson's syntax through the way she has configured the components of her works to evoke sacred spaces.

Mira Schendel (1919-1998) experimented with language and transparency as a way of expressing her spiritual concerns. For Schendel process and materials were paramount in her practice. The discussion in this chapter will focus on Schendel's series of transparent *Monotopias* as portals of language investing the 'invisible through the visible'. Agnes Martin (1912-

2004) is also relevant here, as her paintings, in Martin's words 'are about light, about merging, about formlessness, (and) breaking down form' (Z. Leonard, 2006 p. 84). The discussion, for my purposes, will focus on Martin's painting, *Untitled No 8, 1981*, viewed at the Stedelijk Modern art museum in Amsterdam.

To conclude this chapter I discuss an exhibition entitled *The Others* (November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016- January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017) held in a previous sacred space of religious worship, St Agnes Church in Berlin, focusing on the work of Tacita Dean.

Each of the artist's work discussed in this chapter has been crucial to the development of this project beginning with Lesley Dill who has continued to portray Dickinson and her poetics through her work.

## **Shimmer**

My early research and investigations were influenced by Lesley Dill's portrayal of Emily Dickinson, as one of a series of allegorical foil figures in her installation *Shimmer* (2012). These works present a sequence of Dill's favorite poets and authors who appear to shimmer as aluminum silhouettes along the gallery wall. Each figure embodies elements of language, whilst the distressed aluminum foil makes reference to the positive and negative forces of the human psyche. Each silhouette is recognized for its particular references to the human psyche.



Fig. 4  
Lesley Dill  
*Dress of Flame and Upside Down Bird*, 2006

Dickinson is portrayed as the *Dress of Flame and Upside down bird*. Dill enfold Dickinson with the allegorical dress of flame as a reference to the igniting of her imagination, and a 'melodramatic' reference to the fires of hell in the afterlife. The words 'force flame', from Dickinson's poem number eight hundred and fifty four, are exhaled from the mouth, appearing jagged, like flames of wrath. The floating ties of bandages that engulf the figure are a reference to constraint and the healing of wounds. Dickinson's psyche, portrayed through the upside down bird, is that of a mystical poet, and an unworldly figure.

Through this assemblage of figures Dill plays with symbolic devices as she also pays homage to the poets, writers and artisans from the past. She reinforces the passage of time through the rippling synthesis of foil, which is deliberately beaten to give an aging effect. By infusing and imbuing

alchemic references through Dickinson as *Dress of Flame and Upside-Down Bird*, Dill infers the poet's words are akin to those of a spiritual and magical talis (wo)man. What I found intriguing in her portrayal of Dickinson, is that Dill has cleverly enfolded her own spiritual awakening, influenced by her trips to India, with Dickinson's spiritual awakening.

The influence of Dill's portrayal of Dickinson can be seen in my early experiments where I began to portray Dickinson as the embodiment of her poem through the cut text. Both the shape, collaged from torn prints and the text are a reference to presence and absence. The shape of the body is a literal reference to the poet as the embodiment of her words, while the spaces left by the cut text are a reference to an absence that Dickinson alludes to through her words, spaces and dashes. By placing the figure alongside the 'samples' from earlier prints I continued to reference time in a literal sense.

Below is an early exploration portraying a collaged form of Dickinson, with a map of (sample) prints. The figure of Dickinson, assembled with cut and torn prints, shows an early exploration of cut out text by the laser cutter. As the project progressed I became less concerned with the literal portrayal of Dickinson but instead aimed to seek the folding spaces of the cloistered or sacred space invoked by the poem. However, this exploration was to become the springboard for a series of events that would take place outside the artist's studio<sup>14</sup>.

---

<sup>14</sup> To be discussed in the final chapter with reference to the artist's studio and Fra Angelico.





Fig. 5  
*Wall Collage*, 2015

Whilst Dill celebrated Dickinson as a large-scale allegorical figure, artist Kiki Smith's limited edition book, *Sampler* is an intimate celebration of the poet and her poetry.

## **Sampler**

Kiki Smith often employs densely laden signifiers, especially to highlight her concerns with the ambiguity of femininity through religious icons. Smith is also known for her work with artisans from the community and for celebrating women's handiwork through her sculptures, drawings and printmaking (Heartney 2003, pp. 10 & 11).

In 2006 Smith collaborated with embroiderers to illustrate her limited edition book of Emily Dickinson's poetry called *Sampler*.

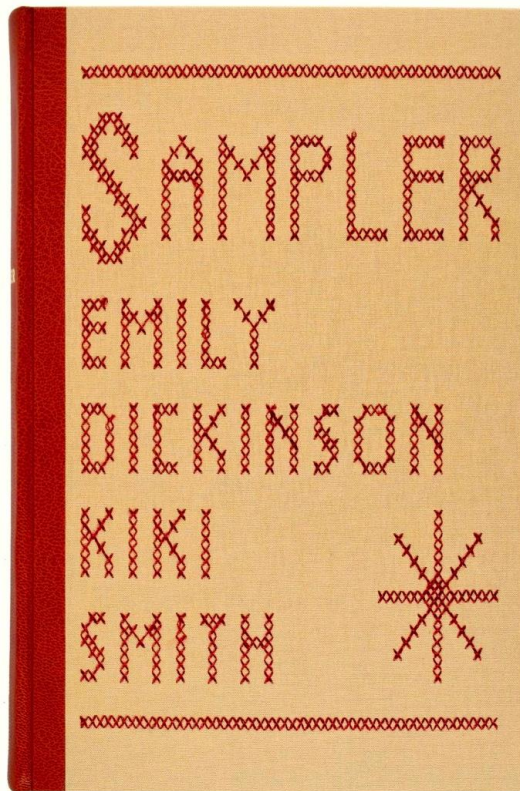


Fig. 6  
Kiki Smith, cover for *Sampler*, 2007

*Sampler* refers to the selection of the poems and the embroidery samples made by young women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to showcase their domestic skills as well as the sampling of Dickinson's well-known poems (Arion Press, 2007). For *Sampler* Smith illustrated two hundred of Dickinson's poems working with embroidery artisans to recreate the curious wonder of her imagination through a series of cross stitches and hatching. Using Letterpress techniques, the illustrations and poems were paired and printed, then bound into a limited edition book. The red stitching of the text on the bound cover of *Sampler* reveres women's embroidery and implies it is important not only as a feminine 'past-time' but as an artisanal skill. Perhaps too the embroidered typeface doubles as a celebration of feminine artisans whose sewing skills are still revered today in the making of religious artifacts and garments. Thus the bound leather and cloth book with its embroidered text on the front cover makes a reverential connection to the prayer book.



Fig. 7  
Kiki Smith working on the prints for *Sampler* at Arion Press, 2006

This image of Smith scratching through the photo negatives using the tools of the embroiderer is an enactment of the materiality of revealing and concealing. Using a sharp tool she lets in pinpricks of light. In the negatives the scratching allows the light to filter through, yet the act of scratching is also one of destruction - an act of defacement. It is as if Smith stops short of destroying the negatives, by veiling her actions with the patterns of embroidery. The scratches may also be a reference to Dickinson's unconventional dashes, which were often seen as being haphazardly scattered throughout the poems. On completion the negatives were etched as photopolymer plates for printing on the Letterpress<sup>15</sup>.

The image below, by Smith is a detail from a relief print, separate from the book but showing Dickinson appearing like an embroidered figurine of the Madonna, shrouded by her garden of earthly delights<sup>16</sup>. The reason for including this image is that it highlights the way the fine stitches of embroidery flatten the imagery whilst the floral forms are an echo of the

<sup>15</sup> <https://abebooks.combook-search/title/sampler/author/dickinson-emily-kiki-smith-illustrator/> 7/4/2016

<sup>16</sup> The same image of Dickinson is on the front piece of *Sampler*; instead of being surrounded by her garden it is the simple portrayal of Dickinson holding a floral bouquet, looking straight ahead.

archived flora pressed between the pages of Dickinson's *Herbarium*. On the otherwise serene face of Dickinson, these fine stitches appear to signify a disturbance, or a disfiguration. The stitches belie the serenity of her gaze and could make reference to the quiet rebellion that Dickinson enacted through her poetry. Smith may be alluding to something else, something disturbing, in Dickinson's strange poems.



Fig. 8  
Detail from relief print of Emily Dickinson in Kiki  
Smith's *Sampler*, 2007

*Sampler* has become an ongoing inspiration in reminding me of the importance of material signifiers. Thus, while my early exploration of letterpress as a form of printed text was too literal, Smith's innovative and simple methods, especially on the cover has reminded me of the

importance of material means in relation to the 'sacred'<sup>17</sup>. Smith's drawings are also reminiscent of the often, simple illustrations in the prayer or hymnbook.

Smith's intimate and illustrative portrayal of Dickinson puts the viewer into the small spaces that women traditionally occupied, whereas Horn challenges the space and the viewer's perceptions through her work.

## Place

When Horn takes the words of Dickinson's poetry she places them so they can be read as a physical structure as well as mapping out an internal space as artist and viewer. Spector says that Dickinson's poetry maps an interior space, a space of interiors – or stanze (1994, p. 62). This is evident as Horn made a series of aluminum columns of variable lengths for her series *When Dickinson Shut Her Eyes* (1993)<sup>18</sup>. The columns arranged against the white gallery wall in clusters of six are a physical reference to the poetic stanza and Dickinson's practice of binding her poems into fascicles. Plastic letters adhered along the length of the columns contain the words from one of Dickinson's poems. The words are bold, emblazoned to the sides of the columns as an affront to the viewer, (the other) who decides how they are to be read. Instead of turning the pages of a book, the viewer/reader becomes the choreographer, finding her unique way to read the lines from the poem, by arching her neck, crouching and moving her body in different directions. Mimicking Dickinson's practice of interchanging and changing words, sentences and stanzas, Horn has alluded to Dickinson's poetic structure and the idea of place as internal as well as external (Heisler, 2010, p. 760).

---

<sup>17</sup> To be discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>18</sup> Horn continues to focus on Dickinson's words. A more recent work is *White Dickinson (THE STARS ARE NOT HEREDITARY)*, 2007



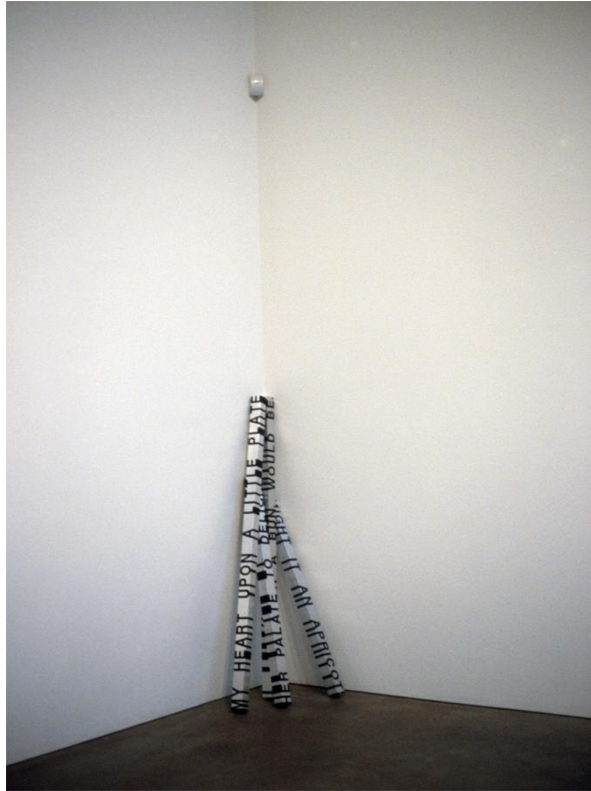


Fig. 9  
 Roni Horn  
*When Dickinson shut her eyes* no. 1027, 1993  
 aluminum rods  
 variable lengths 77 cm to 290 cm

The structural nature of Horn's columns, mimic Dickinson's dashes which were often 'tilted' in various directions and placed between words with apparently no particular reason. Just as Dickinson left her 'chosen' reader to find her own way into her poems (Franklin 1999, pp. 3, 10) so Horn leaves her viewer alone to find her way through the clusters of columns; finding her own meaning from the words. Howe writes that Dickinson, 'In prose and poetry (she) explored the implications of breaking the law just short of breaking off communication with the reader' (Howe 2007, p. 11). So too does Horn, when she leaves her objects in 'place'. Horn's attention to place and space has informed the way I might structure my own work in the gallery space. My intention is to create an architectural space where the viewer is part of the interplay between the space and the installation of the artwork. To allow the works to flow they will be set up in situ.

## Breath

Dickinson has continued to be a powerful source of inspiration for Horn. In the 1990's Horn began a series of large-scale drawings, at the same time she began making her Emily Dickinson Installations (1994-2007) titled *Else*. Though not specifically referencing Dickinson, I propose these drawings can be seen to map the structure of Dickinson's poetic concerns.



Fig. 10  
Roni Horn  
*Else 10*, 2010

As Dickinson's imaginary scape enfolds through the 'Alabaster Chambers' then refolds as the 'worlds scoop their arcs', so Horn's series *Else*, larger than life, pulsates and breathes, alluding to an internal scape and the external architectural space. *Else* is a series of imaginary landscapes, referenced through the folds of sliced pigment pinned to a large grid. Horn's drawings are unfinished as pinned to the wall they can be reconfigured.



Fig. 11  
Roni Horn  
Detail from *Else 10*, 2010

Residual marks of writing and smudges place *Else 10* between the making and the finished object (B. Fer 2013, p. 12). This is what makes Horn's drawings so compelling. They are an assemblage of impossibilities, an opening up of unknown spaces, the mapping out of new possibilities enacted through cutting, tearing, slicing, drawing, writing and smudging. Violence is implicated through the cutting apart of pigmented slices with a sharp implement, yet the violence also suggests an undoing, a letting go of what is known. The pigmented slices are pulled apart then reassembled onto the large sheet of paper. I found it was frustration that caused me to drop strings of letters onto the floor, deface large prints by placing them in the laser cutter to cut out the words of the poem leaving the prints with text holes. For Horn *Else* marks a period of 'emptying out', just as I needed to purge myself of 'the known' to embrace the 'unknown' of new possibilities (Fer 2013, p. 12).

An earlier artist Mira Schendel explored similar possibilities through her transparent monotypes where she employed 'emptying out' as a way to explore the spiritual through art.



### **‘invisible visible’**

Mira Schendel struggled with the visibility of matter and the invisibility of transparency and the void, which she referred to as the conundrum of ‘invisible visibility’ (Schendel, quoted in T. Palhares 2015, p. 419 & N. Weston, 2014, p. 91)<sup>19</sup>. Schendel’s conundrum and subsequent art-work was influenced by her deep spirituality, enhanced by her time spent as a child in Catholic Italy, where she lived as a displaced person with her Jewish parents, during post war Europe. Schendel explored her spiritual concerns through philosophy and her art practice where she experimented extensively through materials, using light and geometric compositions. Yet it was a serendipitous gift and meeting that inspired Schendel to experiment with Japanese paper and monotypes, as the right potent combination for her ideas (Palhares, 2015 p. 419).

Schendel was given a stack of fine Japanese rice paper, which she initially put aside, unsure of how the fragile paper could become part of her work. When she did start to ‘tinker’ with the paper she became disheartened by its fragility. However, after a chance encounter with a woman who made monotypes, Schendel returned to the rice paper and discovered the transparency of the paper was enhanced through the immediacy of this simple technique. This was the blend she had been seeking and a series of unique monotypes emerged (Palhares, 2015 p.419).

The image below *Untitled* (63736) 1964–1965 ca. is part of a series of monotypes entitled *Religious writings / Escritas cheias religiosas*, using Japanese paper. The transparent paper easily picks up subtle smudges, creases, lines and reinforces the bold mark-making and text, which appears to float through the paper. Schendel was able to utilize these features to invoke fragility and strength simultaneously.

---

<sup>19</sup> From the *Book of Kings*. Didi-Huberman quotes the formulation of this paradox when discussing Fra Angelico’s work. (Georges Didi-Huberman, 1990, 35).

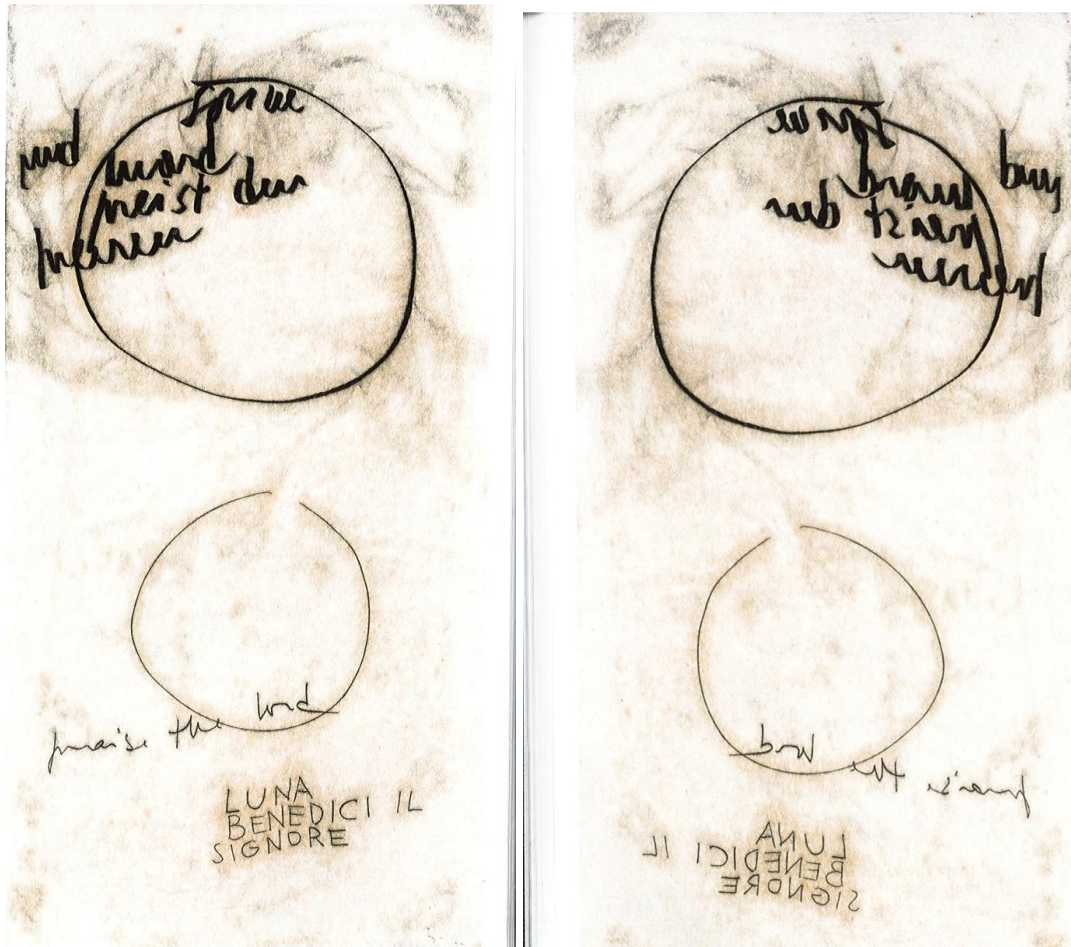


Fig. 12  
 Mira Schendel  
*Religious writings /Escritas cheias religiosas* ca. 1964, pp. 65- 66

The gestural fragments of religious text, some bold, others barely readable, are punctuated by open circles and when viewed in context with the transparent paper appear ambiguous (N. Weston 2014, p. 91). Yet the open dark circles appear as an extension of the writing with the lighter circles being more suggestive of shadows. The emboldened words ‘LUNA BENEDICI SIGNORE’ – MOON BLESS THE LORD – taken from the Book of Psalms, is perhaps a clue to the way Schendel uses symbolic and spiritual references. The moon, too can be suggestive of the light of the heavens, like Dickinson’s *firmaments* and brings to mind the unfathomable infinity of Dickinson’s *Soundless...dots on snow*. The open circle is a complex symbol used extensively in Eastern and Western spirituality,

which Schendel would have been aware of. Perhaps she alludes to the beauty found in the imperfections of her smudges and the creases in the thin paper as it is pulled from the inked surface to make the monotypes.

The monotype (above) shows both sides of the transparent paper. I find Schendel invites the viewer to perceive different perspectives of the same image, as Deleuze proposes different views through the folds of the fold. Schendel allows the transparent space of the paper to become integral to the image while she leaves the viewer to ponder what else she may be suggesting through her intimate, gestural mark-making. Also through using the technique of the monotype, by impressing the paper directly onto an inked surface, Schendel evokes an immediacy, which she enhances through a drift of smudges and gestural marks (T. Palhares, 2015, pp. 419-421). The mirroring, the transparent paper, the 'accidental' smudges and gestural marks are Schendel's way of capturing glimpses of the 'invisible'.

Schendel has provided me with the visual understanding of how I might bring a sense of the 'invisible visible', through material means. Indeed, as Schendel wrote that her encounter with a woman who made monotypes proved to be serendipitous, I too have found that my encounter with Schendel's art and processes has provided me with the tools to move forward. Initially this was done by employing thin transparent paper as stencils for layering ink in a series of mono prints called *Banners* that are discussed in Chapter Three. The stencils have proved to be an important link between process and the final artefact, which is discussed in Chapter Three, where Schendel's influence becomes more evident.

While Schendel often used ink black for her mark making I use transparent inks to create a series of layers and spaces on heavy white paper. As Schendel references the beauty of imperfections through her smudges

and open circles I have taken the torn stencils of Japanese paper, stitched them as clusters, to invoke a mirroring of the images from the *Banner* series. Yet the clusters do not directly mirror a particular *Banner* as they are misshapen stencils having been continuously printed, pressed, torn and creased. Schendel's unique Monotypes have also been influential as a means to encourage me to let go of what is known, that is the finished artefact and embrace uncertainty, and a sense of the 'invisible visibility'.

While Schendel's process involved transparency through materials, painter Agnes Martin employed multiple layers of pastel hued paint, which she intercepted with horizontal grids drawn in graphite pencil for her luminous surfaces.

## **Elsewhere**

Martin's large painting *Untitled no 8* currently on display at the Stedelijk Modern Art Museum in Amsterdam, exemplifies how Martin uses the shape of her canvas and pastel hues intercepted by graphite grids to create light and lightness. The day I viewed Martin's painting *Untitled no 8* with its luminous expanse of the pastel surface and horizontal grids of graphite I was reminded of the lines in a poem with each grid resembling the stanza. The lines of graphite shimmer, like strings of pastel hued pearls over the bumps in the surface of the paint and reflect the light that shines through the white curtained window directly opposite Martin's painting. The uneven surface and the bumps of light are too a reminder of how language floats in and out of consciousness, as does the language of the poem.

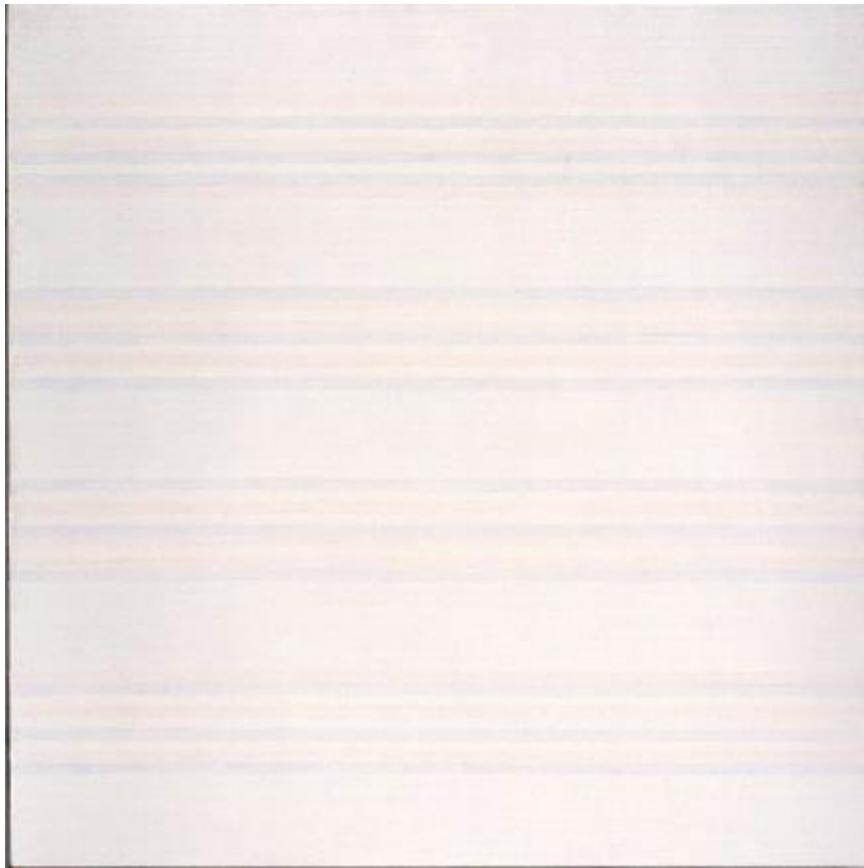


Fig. 13  
Agnes Martin  
*Untitled No. 8, 1981*

I feel I am elsewhere, remembering what I have read about Martin's paintings and what Martin too writes about her work. 'My paintings have neither object nor space nor line nor anything – no forms. They are light, lightness, about merging, about formlessness, breaking down form' (Martin, quoted in Leonard 2006, p. 84). It is this simplicity when describing her work that draws me to Martin. Martin's reference to breaking down form infers a spiritual awareness where there is a merging through the act of painting to the painted surface that is reflected through the luminosity of the canvas (Mays 2005, p. 104). She neither practiced Christian nor non-Western spiritual disciplines, but absorbed their influences (Cotter 1998, p. 79). Martin's ambivalence towards formal religion draws me to her painting as I am also drawn towards Dickinson's poem. Martin's painting could be viewed as her sacred space.

I felt I was alone in the gallery space mesmerized by Martin's expansive painting, unable to move for fear it would disappear or I would not be able to see past the physicality of the pastel hues and feel the expressive qualities of Martin's work.

Martin's painting, as it is currently displayed, is in a space with three other paintings of a similar scale: Barnett Newman's *Cathedra*; Willem de Kooning's *North Atlantic Light*; Mark Rothko's *Untitled (Blue, Umber, Blue Umber, Brown)*. A smaller moody landscape painted by Marsden Hartley (1877 – 1943) of *Camden Hills from Baker's Island, Penobscot Bay*, sits directly opposite Martin's painting. At first I was bemused that she alone was amongst such male painters. Initially too, I found the brutal intensity of the other paintings disruptive. The shimmering vibrant blues of Barnett's *cathedra* were overwhelming, while Rothko's solid canvas of blues and umber / browns, resembled a heavy wooden closed door. De Kooning's surface of swirling colours too appeared chaotic against Martin's gentle grids. It was as if these paintings with their unknown and formidable forces were to be quieted by the quivering mysticism and shimmering light in Martin's canvas.

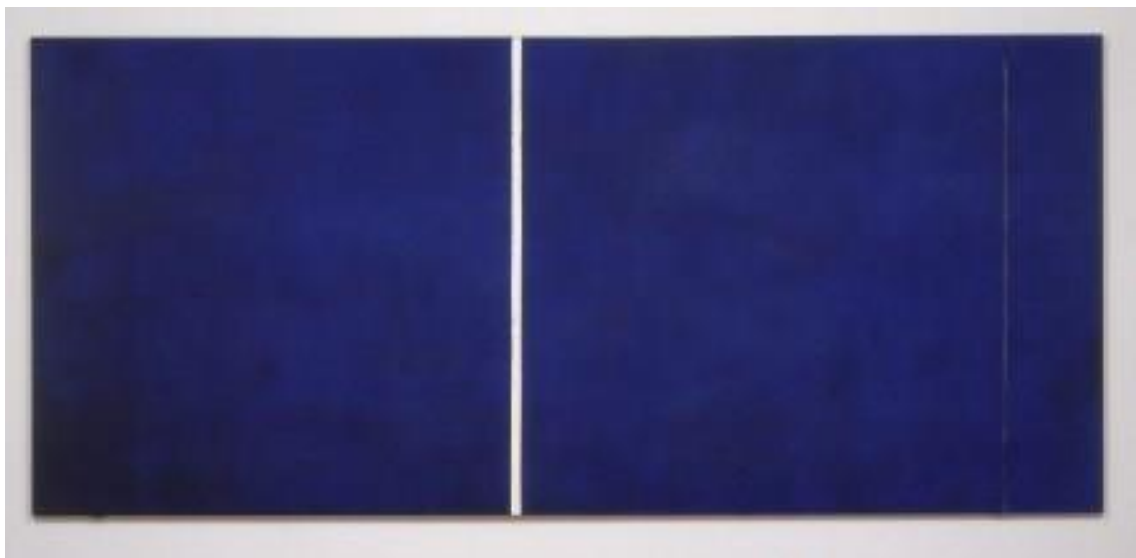


Fig. 14  
*Barnett Newman*  
*Cathedra*, 1954



Fig.15  
Willem de Kooning  
*North Atlantic Light*, 1977



Fig. 16  
Mark Rothko  
*Untitled (Umber, blue, Umber, Brown)*  
1962

I imagined Martin had secretly taken the shimmering white from de Kooning's *Northern lights* to fill her canvas with light, then washed it through Newman's blues to make her violets and finally stretched Rothko's umber into the palest of yellows and dissembled the brown until she found her shade of pink. It is as if Martin mixes through the disquiet found in the paintings of these masters until they resemble shimmering pastels of pearls providing an understated feminine evocation of the spiritual.

I recollect my own work to empty my intense palette of deep browns and umbers by smearing specks of colour with transparent medium to make the palest of tints and transparencies. The deep tones, of the image below, an early experiment with mono printing, are intercepted with light through embossing strings of text and has pre-empted a series of works entitled *Banners*, discussed in chapter three.





Fig. 17  
Mono print  
40 x 124 cm

In contrast to Martin's grids, is Tacita Deans figurative sculpture and video installation in a small exhibition entitled *The Others*.

### **The Others**

*The Others*, is the title of a recent exhibition held in a previous Catholic church called St Agnes (12<sup>th</sup> November 2016 – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2017), in Berlin<sup>20</sup>. This exhibition of twelve artists from diverse backgrounds enabled them to communicate their concerns of materiality through Christianity and art<sup>21</sup>. *The Others* turns the gaze back on the artists as a

---

<sup>20</sup> St Agnes Church, is a monumental former church built in the 1960s in the Brutalist style.

<http://www.koeniggalerie.com/>

<sup>21</sup> Works by Tacita Dean, Elmgreen & Dragset, Pepe Espaltú, Martin Kippenberger, Kris Martin, Ron Muek, Aiden Salakhova, Andres Serranom Santiago Sierra, Young –Jun, Nasan Tur and Mark Wallinger.



reflection of their backgrounds and how this relates to a secular society. Each artist addressed a particular issue pertaining to Christianity, of belief, gender, race, morality and sexuality.

However, Tacita Dean's installation of St Agnes' breasts, placed in a small dark tower, away from the main exhibition was most poignant. Leading to the open metal stairs of the tower was a small landing with an internal grotto upon which sat a pair of copper breasts and a 'Mills and Boon' book.



Fig. 18  
Tacita Dean  
*St Agnes*, 2016

The darkened staircase led to an even smaller mezzanine landing with a video on one side and chairs for viewing on the other. A video narrated by Dean depicts a group of women 'powdering' sets of plaster cast breasts. This internal space, the simplicity of the grotto with the breasts and the video showing the women in the process of making is a commentary on women's space and place. Whilst the amputated breasts highlight the sexualizing and sensationalizing of women's bodies, Dean has posited an

internal sacred space where women's work and bodies are revered.

*The Others* gives further credence to Heartney's premise of the ongoing importance of religion and art and my investigation of the sacred space. St Agnes has hidden within its walls the unresolved issues pertaining to religion and secular society, which each artist has addressed through the exhibition. Whilst Dean and the others use figurative representations to bring attention to their concerns, my attention is also with the sacred space they occupy. I have deliberately focused on Dean's response to this religious space as a poignant reminder of how women make their own sacred space, as Dickinson found her domestic realm to be her sacred space. Dean and *The Others* also serve as a contrast to another sacred space, San Marco in Florence, where Fra Angelico painted his most revealing frescos.

This chapter has focused on female artists and how often, conflicted issues of religion and mortality have provided the means to explore spirituality and sacred spaces. Heartney has provided the context for discussing the diverse responses of female artists as they grapple with the means to express their conflicted feelings about religion and their gender. Dickinson and her poetry continue to be used as a vehicle for some artists; all have sought to evoke their feelings through the materiality of their art. These artists have all provided me with glimpses of how I might approach my own work as I seek to express through the layers of my work the 'invisible visible', through the idea of the sacred space and is central to the discussion of my work in Chapter Three.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Modus operandi**

In this final chapter I discuss how I came to echo Dickinson's modus operandi, as an expression of the sacred. Engagement through experiential and tacit knowledge has led to often unexpected and serendipitous outcomes, allowing me to bring a new understanding to the language and structure of the poem, through the visual language of printmaking. I explain how my printmaking practice was transformed by the poem and how I was inspired by Dickinson's mode of working. Her use of discarded envelopes has inspired me to rethink my approach to how the completed image can be reformed to bring new meaning to the spaces they occupy. Dickinson's stitched fascicles of poems have caused me to wonder how I might explore the poem referencing these clusters and the idea of the sacred space. This has resulted in a series of banners where layers of stencils and transparent inks were employed to explore the idea of hidden and veiled spaces, whilst her carefully constructed Herbarium of dried flowers has inspired a series of drawings on the lithographic stone. This project is about the paper and I have used a mixture of Hahnemühle (350gsm)<sup>22</sup> roll paper, Velin BFK Rives<sup>23</sup>, Japanese transparent paper, Japanese rayon and Asuka Inkjet Rolls. The papers were selected for versatility, strength and flexibility and, in the case of the Japanese papers, their transparency.

I employ theorist Barad's proposal of im/possibilities through the intra-actions of materials and maker. Im/possibilities can come from symbiotic interactions and serendipitous events. Barad suggests that when subject and object are symbiotic there is a possibility of a disruption of previous continuities, resulting in a non-linear folding that can dissolve the binary of

---

<sup>22</sup> [www.hahnemuehle.#57C380](http://www.hahnemuehle.#57C380)

<sup>23</sup> [Velin%20BFK%20Rives%C2%AE.webloc](#)

fixed ideas. I take her proposal as meaning that in order to break free from past habits and methods you must take 'disruptions', mistakes and unexpected events to create new possibilities. These have emerged in the reuse of discarded prints, lithography plates and through the possibilities posed by new technologies (Barad 2010, pp. 244, 254). Her proposal has provided me with the means to constantly interrogate the methods I employ and reach for new possibilities, at times revisiting abandoned ideas, in my search to make visual an intangible or sacred space.

## **Lithography**

The main printing process, which I have used for this project is lithography. Stone lithography is a planographic process, where the resistance of oil and water produce a chemical reaction allowing images to be developed on the surface of a stone (or plate). To activate the lithography stone a series of graining using water and refined grit is needed to clean the surface. Once the surface of the stone is reactivated it can be used for image making, especially drawing, with oil-based mediums. The image placed on the stone is chemically etched, rested, then rolled with ink and washed with water causing a chemical reaction, whereby the image is able to be transferred onto another medium, usually paper. This reaction relies on the symbiosis between the maker (the subject) and the stone (object). Thus, there is not a complete control of the medium by the maker, but a need for letting go so that the forces of causality can open up new possibilities (Barad's interview with van der Tuin, 2012, 54 -55). The idea of letting go, and allowing events to intercede in the process has encouraged me to grasp at new possibilities between the intra-action of materials and maker.



Fig.19  
Lithography stone etched and rolled with ink ready for printing,  
2015

### **Experimenting with Text**

Experimentation with text has been an important element of my practice. I have been inspired by Dickinson's use of grammatical devices in her poetry particularly her dashes and the fragmentation of text. I began to experiment with letterpress printing techniques, in keeping with the printing methods of the nineteenth century, using wooden blocks of text and hand printing onto printed images as decorative references. Letterpress blocks were printed onto stiff paper, hand-cut and threaded in a line so they could be read as the poem is read in the printed format. The words were then strung between two industrial poles as a reference to the two stanzas of the poem. However, I was not satisfied with this as I found I was merely copying the text of the poem. A breakthrough about how best to utilize the text came in unexpected circumstances.

Early in 2014 my studio at the College of Art became waterlogged, and I had to pull everything off the damp walls including the string of text. As I pulled the string, the text became entangled and messy as it fell to the ground. Looking at what was now a mess it occurred to me that meaning, implicit and explicit also becomes entangled, shifts and changes between

generations, cultures and over time. Barad talks about cutting- together- apart and the violence needed for the reworking of new possibilities. The text, pulled apart, became an ambiguous folding formation that alluded to something else with unknown possibilities that were yet to unfold (van der Tuin's Interview with Barad, 2012, p. 52).

I took the tangled mess to the print studio and rolled the organic forms around a large inked roller. The entangled text when pulled from the roller left an embossed impression, which I rolled onto a clean lithographic stone. The embossed form left a smear of ambiguous stains and reflective spaces on the surface of the stone. D. Schön refers to knowledge of materials and how they interact as "tacit" knowing through actions (1983, p. 49). Although the actions seemed like a 'serendipitous event', as a maker I had a sense of knowing that possibilities could be explored in reconfiguring the entangled form. My personal reactions had brought about 'new understanding' of the processes and medium, which I continued to explore (Barad 2012, p. 54, Barrett & Bolt 2007, p. 5). The material form of the text that had hung between the industrial poles had been reimaged as an inky shimmer on the surface of the stone. The inked roller had created its own rhythm and the letters were no longer readable but instead radiated shards of light on the surface of the stone.

The next step was to print the image from the stone. The image appeared to shudder with light as I rhythmically rolled the surface of the stone with ink. It was incomplete but on reflection took on an ambiguous form. Rather than draining meaning from the words there was something 'unfigurable' in the shudder that emanated from the form. As I reflected on the printed image, the shimmering folding form reminded me of Dickinson's spaces and dashes between the writing. This I realized was merely the beginning of my experiments with text and I began to wonder how I could emulate these spaces in a more controlled manner.

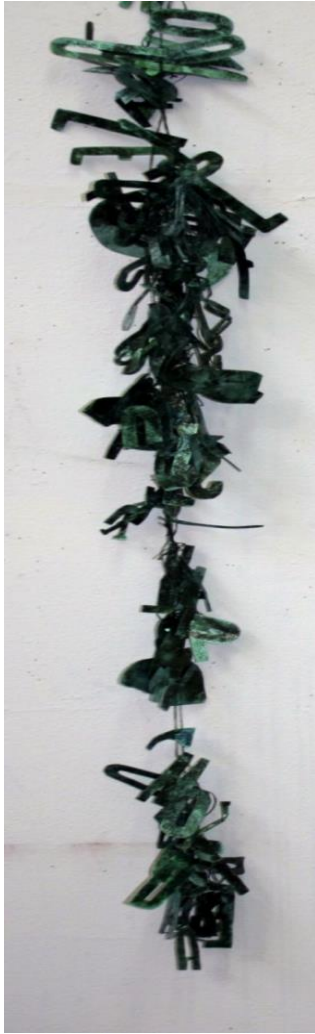


Fig. 20  
Tangled cut text from  
letterpress blocks, 2014



Fig. 21  
Lithography with text, 2015

I put aside the nineteenth century letterpress blocks and began experimenting with cutting out repetitive lines of the poem on discarded prints, using the machinery of the laser cutter. There was a moment of serendipity as I watched the laser cutter burn through the paper leaving the absent shape of the text, just as Dickinson's dashes mark the space, a pause between the words. As the paper cut text dropped through the honeycomb ridges of the laser-cutter I obsessively swept them up. They were mirror images of the holes in the paper and like the tangled text once strung across the poles of the studio, they were also messy. The more messy the text became the more ordered the holes in the paper appeared. It was as if they were diametrically opposed. The rigid holes made by the laser cutter reminded me of the patterns bees make when they are



in a swarm. Sometimes they seem like Deleuze's folds of fish swimming through the shimmering water and other times they are like the ideas of the soul waiting to be realized (Deleuze 1993, p. 5)

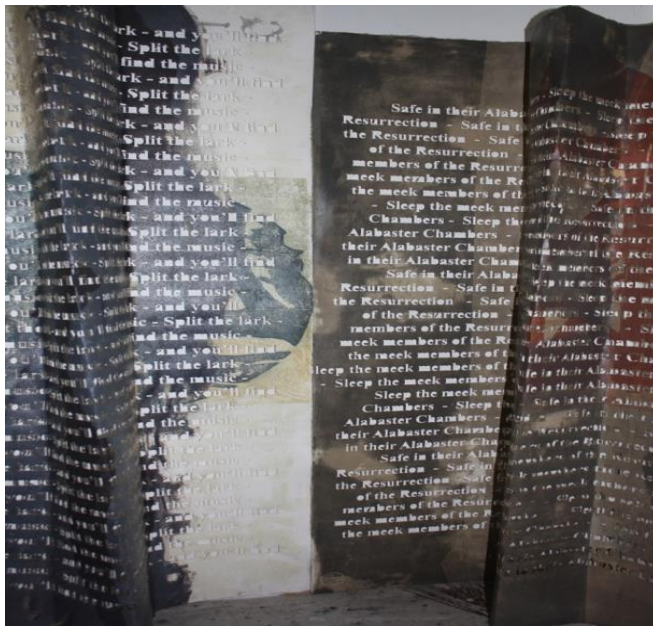


Fig. 22  
Prints with laser cut text, 2015

## Sculptural scrolls

I began by tearing the prints into strips following the patterned lines of the text as a reference to the fragmented poem. The prints with the cut text were torn into strips following the patterned lines of the cut text. Other prints that only had a few words cut out by the laser cutter were torn into smaller shapes (27 x 26 cm) and have become samples, put aside until further notice. After separating the images, I brought another element into the project, through the heating of unrefined bee's wax, using it as a medium for molding the flat prints into rolled shapes. The strips were dipped into the hot wax and molded into forms, emulating rolled manuscripts. As the wax is pure it does not set, which means the paper scrolls are not archival and they are in a continuous state of flux.





language never expressed and sometimes the individual letters are simply parts of words waiting to be reformed. Perhaps too they reference new possibilities, waiting to be explored (van der Tuin, 2014). As piles of text they are empty of meaning, yet they intimate everything as the residue of my ideas, scattered, conflicting and waiting to be reformed, reimagined. The containment of the text in the glass dome reminds me of Dickinson's self-imposed containment in her domestic space, and the *Alabaster Chamber* where the mortal body sleeps in a suspended state. The glass dome ensures the text remains in a suspended state, part decorative and part archival as evidence for the spaces in the *scrolls* and *Banners*. The text is the residue that pertains to new possibilities, as known assumptions, discarded when the laser cutter burnt shapes of text through the paper. As matter the text can infer the physical residue of language and the ideas of the soul that Deleuze infers through folds of the Fold.



Fig.24  
Victorian glass bell dome with laser cut text  
2015 -17

## Sample Wall

Another series of works – *Sample Wall* – originated from tearing up some of my prints into smaller shapes, which caused not only a disfiguration of the original image but marked the beginning of a new reference that I had not considered, namely the torn pages and the folds of a book. By tearing and cutting the images that had been derived from my original conceptions I was able to free myself from the preconceptions and literal imaging of the poet and her poem.



Fig. 25  
Samples of torn prints, 2015

The small prints mimic the scraps of writing that Dickinson left behind in her envelopes and fascicles. The prints are not quite a square, not quite rectangular (26 x 27 cm) and as they are pinned then pulled apart and re-pinned to the wall they make reference to undulating folds. A series of heavy dark prints are pulled away from each other, allowing glimpses of light that had been obliterated, when they were part of the larger print. Other prints are lighter, the spaces between, brighter more translucent. They remind me of the textual qualities of Dickinson's poem, the undulating 'arcs of the Worlds'. Dickinson also famously sewed one thousand of her poems together, in no particular order, as fascicles; I now have one hundred small prints. Sixty prints pinned to the gallery wall are reconfigured as a honeycomb shape. They are interconnecting samples mapping ideas and new understandings. The *Sample Map* is also a gateway that connects fleeting moments of imagination, anticipation,

contemplation and anxiety. The fragmented parts of the honeycomb shaped *Sample Map*, make reference to the other works in the gallery.

## **Banners**

In the series comprising ten banners the evocation of the sacred space alluded to in Dickinson's poem is a central concern. A breakthrough in finding a visual language suitable for expressing this came after viewing a series of panels in the convent of San Marco in Florence. The convent of San Marco sits alone, almost stranded outside the tourist hub of the cobbled streets of Florence, as a place of contemplation and tranquility.

On a dank and dreary day in November of 2014, I set off to visit the convent to view Fra Angelico's frescos especially the fresco of *Our Lady of the Shadows* (1450). What particularly caught my eye were the four lower panels that sat directly under the top fresco that Didi-Huberman describes as not being what they seem. I continued to crouch, moving along the wall of the corridor to take photos gazing at the gaudy swirls of paint and wondering whether Fra Angelico meant them to be fictive marble, fashionable at the time? The monks too would have had to crouch or kneel to view the panels, perhaps as they mopped or swept the floors. These panels have continued to haunt me and eventually made a significant contribution to my *modus operandi*.

Being in this austere place of contemplation I became aware of the light from the cell opposite where the reflection of light disrupted the painted surface on the panels. Yet just as each page of a mystery novel ensures the intensity of the plot so it was with the panels as my eyes shifted from one panel to the next. I found myself caught up in the swirls, the gaudy colours and arcs of paint seemingly flung across the surface of the panels.

Didi-Huberman proposes Fra Angelico was using the folds of the painted surface to reference what cannot be expressed through the figurative portrayal of the narrative. Didi-Hiberman (1995, p.29) proposes that the panels are 'both' fictive yet 'not' fictive marble, and in this context they can infer Deleuze's description of the folds in marble.

Sometimes the veins are the pleats of matter that  
surround living beings held in the mass, marble  
resembling the rippling lake that teems with fish.  
Sometimes the veins are innate ideas in the soul,  
like twisted figures or powerful statues caught in a  
block of marble.

(Deleuze, 1993, p. 4)

It seems that Fra Angelico conjured the depths of the soul through the swirling folds of splattered paint. Centuries later Deleuze finds an analogy for the veins in marble as 'ideas of the soul'. Perhaps Fra Angelico was also alluding to the invisibility of the soul through his veins of fictive marble. Didi-Huberman proposes Fra Angelico's fictive marble is an allegory for the paradox of the invisibility of the sacred in the well-known narrative<sup>24</sup>. Thus Fra Angelico's splattering of the painted surface can be more than an imitation of marble as it appears like he boldly flung the paint across the surface of the panel as a disruption to the gentle painting above. This disruption, deliberates Didi-Huberman was Fra Angelico's way of pertaining to something else, something sacred in the narrative above that cannot be made visible. I wonder if Dickinson thought the folds of satin could also be like swirling folds of paint, where the sacred or

---

<sup>24</sup> Didi-Huberman quotes this formulation by an unknown contemporary of Fra Angelico to explain the paradox:

Eternity appears in time, immensity in measurement, the Creator in the creature... the unfigurable in the figure, the unnarratable in discourse, the inexplicable in speech, the uncircumscribable in the place, the invisible in vision (G. Didi-Huberman, 1995, pp. 35).

spiritual is evoked through the layers. I also wonder if Fra Angelico used the light from the cell behind the panels to add to the shimmer and the visual dissemblance of the narrative, as Dickinson used her dashes as a visual dissemblance of the space between the words.

When returning from my visit to San Marco I found I had inadvertently taken a photo with my figure as a shadow, caught in the far left panel. The diffracted light from the window in the cell opposite had caused a disruption on the surface of the panel in the shape of a ghostly shadow. I remembered Barad's proposal of hauntologies where the re-fracturing of events can cause a rupture and refolding of time (Barad, 2010 p. 52). I, the tourist taking photos, in a fleeting moment, had caused a temporal fracturing of time through Fra Angelico's splatters of paint and their mythic inferences. The figure, now shadowed through the folding planes of paint makes reference to the pores of the skin where inner thoughts seep, from the inside to outside, hovering between, revealing and concealing. In order to 'remember' the moment the image has been printed to include the fictive frame around the panel, as a reminder of the panel's placement under the larger image, along the corridor of the convent. The fictive frame around the panel can also allude to the border that encloses a page. Sometimes the border is blank, or decorative and symbolic. It defines and encloses the space.



Fig 26  
Fra Angelico  
Photograph of shadow from lower left panel under *Our Lady of the Shadows*,  
1450  
Photograph: 2014

The figure in the panel alluded to something missing. I have endeavored to bring the reflection of the figure in the panel through my reflection in the mirror, drawing directly on a large lithographic plate. The image was etched, inked and printed onto a large sheet of white paper (80 x 120 cm). The plate did not hold the image and after each subsequent printing the figure became less visible leaving an increasingly vague impression on the paper. The almost impossible task of registering a large sheet of paper resulted in a distortion or shimmer of the figure. I tried to remedy this with transparent Japanese mulberry paper that I had previously printed, using it as a stencil, torn and glued on either side of the figure, containing the figure in the space. I later removed the collaged paper by soaking the



print in a large water trough. The white space on either side of the figure makes reference to angel's wings or lungs. Yet the figure still appeared trapped between the white folds of paper. I realized that instead of alluding to the sacred space I had reverted to imaging the trace of the body.



Fig. 27  
Untitled, 2015  
Plate and stone Lithography (plate) with collage (left) and collage removed (right).  
80 x 120 cm

The lithographic plate was no longer active and what remained was a ghostly image of the figure. I took a tube of Japanese glue and traced around the shape of the figure. Then moving away from the shape I began to squeeze lines to invoke the folds of a curtain or dress. Once the glue was dry the plate was shellacked and left. The glue was then lifted from the plate, and the figure was unrecognizable. I had reconfigured the previous image and surface for a series of mono-prints.





Fig. 28  
Pulling glue from the shellacked lithography plate  
2016

Subsequently, the plate was rolled up with transparent inks and layered with stencils to create shapes and spaces; each inked layering was printed onto thick printmaking paper<sup>25</sup>. The tangled text was again re-used, this time as an embossing tool leaving unidentifiable splits of light on the paper. The stenciled wings have been re-used for layering, with more cut and torn transparent paper added as needed. A piece of linocut, the length and width of the *Banners*, has provided an additional surface for the monoprints.

The printed figure on the Japanese paper has become integral to linking the first and second stanza.<sup>26</sup> Layered as a stencil onto a piece of inked linocut it has created a shadowy distortion that appears to float through the translucent layers. It is as if the figure referenced in the earlier image has been released from its constraints. Initially I mimicked the poet and referenced the figure in the imagery about the first stanza. Separating the

---

<sup>25</sup> The length of the Banner was dictated by the length of the paper, which came off a roll of Hahnemühle. To make the lengths the width (120 cm) became the length so that each banner would have the deckle of the paper top and bottom and the paper was torn down the middle for the width.

<sup>26</sup> The lines of the poem are indicated through the *Banners* five in each stanza.

stanzas did not allude to the fluidity of the body and soul, nor give a sense of the sacred space. I remembered Barad's hauntologies of mythic time and im/probabilities and started to re-configure the prints, releasing them from their constraints as single frame images. The figure remains but barely visible, appearing as an organic distortion that belies its mortality floating through the transparent layers, as in the second verse, the soul floats through the universe. The ten single images are now a series of five diptychs.

The elongated form was a reference to the manner in which Dickinson used the dash to mark an absence but as a series of diptychs the banners also reference the fluidity between the two stanzas. The banners do not directly mimic the subject of the poem, but rather the stanza and stanza of the sacred space, which I proposed Dickinson referenced through her dashes. As mono prints they are unique states and as such make reference to the poet's unique handwriting.

Employing the figure and the reconfiguring of the prints into the format of the diptych has brought new possibilities to the visual work and how these prints are to be exhibited. The figure in the *Banners* makes reference to gender, mortality and unintentionally aging, as it is barely visible and appears to dissolve through the layers of transparent ink.

The *Banner* series has aimed to contribute to new understanding in exploring monoprinting. I found that by employing multiple transparent layers that my ideas became more fluid ensuring new possibilities could be explored and developed. The 'cutting-together-apart'<sup>27</sup> and mapping of entanglements through process also maps the internal space of the imagination through the stencils and thin layers of transparent inks.

---

<sup>27</sup> The series of Samples also references Barad's 'cutting together apart'.

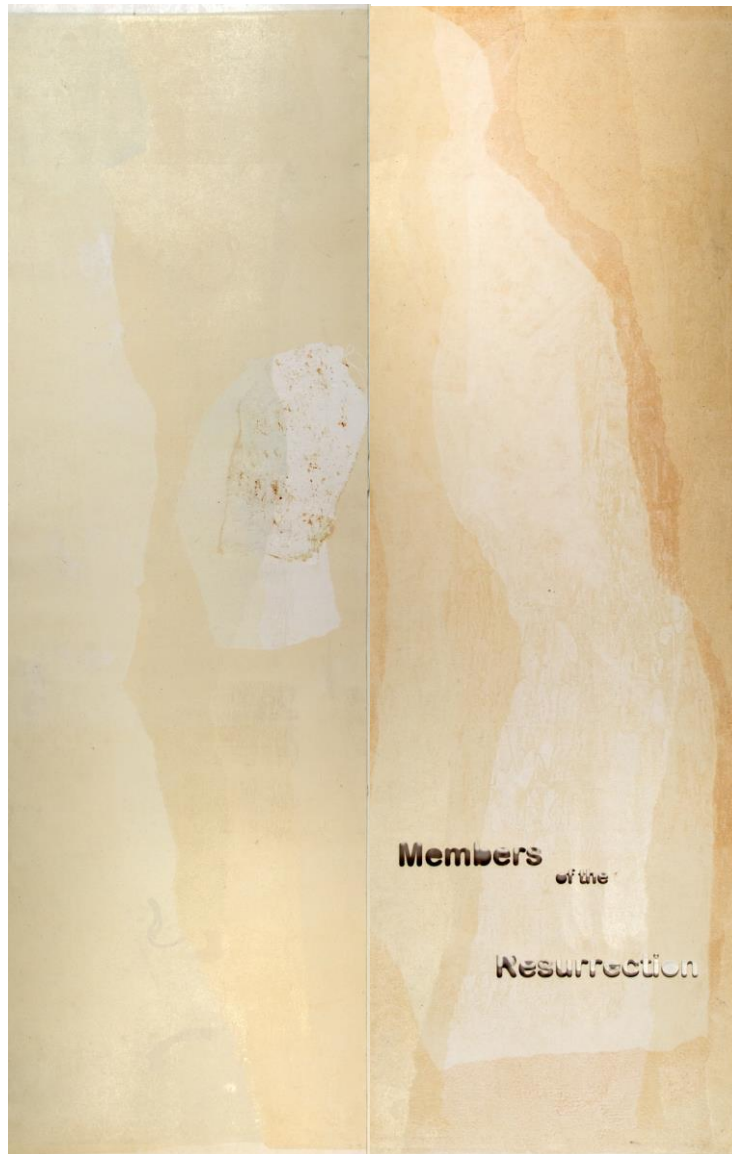


Fig.29  
*Banners, 2015*  
Mono print with laser cut text  
Photograph: Gerard Dixon

## Stencils

The inked stencils have been clustered together and sewn as Dickinson sewed her fascicles. Some are almost opaque from the continual over printing. Although they are the remnants of the making they are also the organic residue of the formal *Banners* and can act as a mirror into the messy entanglements of process. Hung in the exhibition space the stencils are the link between process and artifact, as Dickinson's fascicles are the material evidence of her ideas.



Fig. 30  
Stencils clustered together and sewn as fascicles, 2016  
Photograph: Gerard Dixon

## The Herbarium

Another series of works – *The Herbarium* -- is inspired by Dickinson's practice of pressing flowers. Working with the medium of stone lithography, this suite of images is based on the shapes from Dickinson's Herbarium<sup>28</sup>. Stone lithography, with its mixture of water and oil, transfers the image as a flat surface, from the stone to paper mimicking the flattened flowers of the Herbarium, pressed between the pages of a book.

---

<sup>28</sup> Morris, LA 2006, *Emily Dickinson's herbarium; a facsimile edition*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.



Fig. 31  
*Herbarium*, 2016  
Stone lithograph  
Photograph: Gerard Dixon

The stone is also the medium for my drawing, as I do not make sketches. I begin as the poet writes, drawing onto the stone. The deletions and additions come after the first printing. The poet often returned to her poems, changing, as in the case of this poem, the whole stanza. I am drawn to particular shapes and it is in this context that I choose the plants to draw. I am also restricted by the shape and dimensions of the stone, as the poet was also restricted by her access to paper, and the plants she had in her garden. The drawing on the stone is dark and intense, as the

poet's words allude to death. Black ink is required to hold the image for the first printing then the stone is rolled with translucent ink and the image begins to float on the stone like the words in the poem. The reflective tones of the ink reflect the *Alabaster* whilst alluding to the fragility of the wafer thin flowers. I begin the rhythmic process of printing onto paper, sometimes wet over wet allowing the ink to blur the edges of the flower. Other times, I leave the paper to rest between, before adding another transparent layer over the dried ink. In-between, pearl essence is added directly onto the paper adding a shimmer that reflects and flattens the image.

The images reference Dickinson's seemingly random arrangement of the plants in her Herbarium. Some of the images bear the trace of previous shapes and make reference to the residue of the plants, creased and fragmented. Powered pearl essence gives the images a reflective quality that changes in the light and alludes to something intangible. The images are an expression of something 'else', something, Schön reflects, that is not always easy to explain (Schön 1983, p. 49).

The lithographs are a direct response to the poet's own methods of working. Dickinson re-wrote her poem several times searching for the words to express what she wanted to communicate. In a similar manner I delete the image on the stone, reimagining what it is I wish to communicate. The emerging image is not always registered causing a re-fracturing of the space, or a shimmer on the printed-paper. Eventually there is only the residue left on the stone, there is nothing 'else' left to print. The stone is completely washed and the process begins again.



Fig. 32  
*Herbarium*, 2016  
Stone lithography  
Photograph: Gerard Dixon

In this manner the *Herbarium* series has become another exploration of transparency. Working with transparent inks on the lithographic stone proved to limit the possibilities for editions as the grease from the transparent inks starts to leave a residue of oily dirt on the stone. While this was partially resolved by constant abrasive cleaning it caused the image to fade. However, working with these limitations I have been able to indicate the passage of time as elements of each drawing were over printed onto other images creating a repetition of inky forms throughout this series.



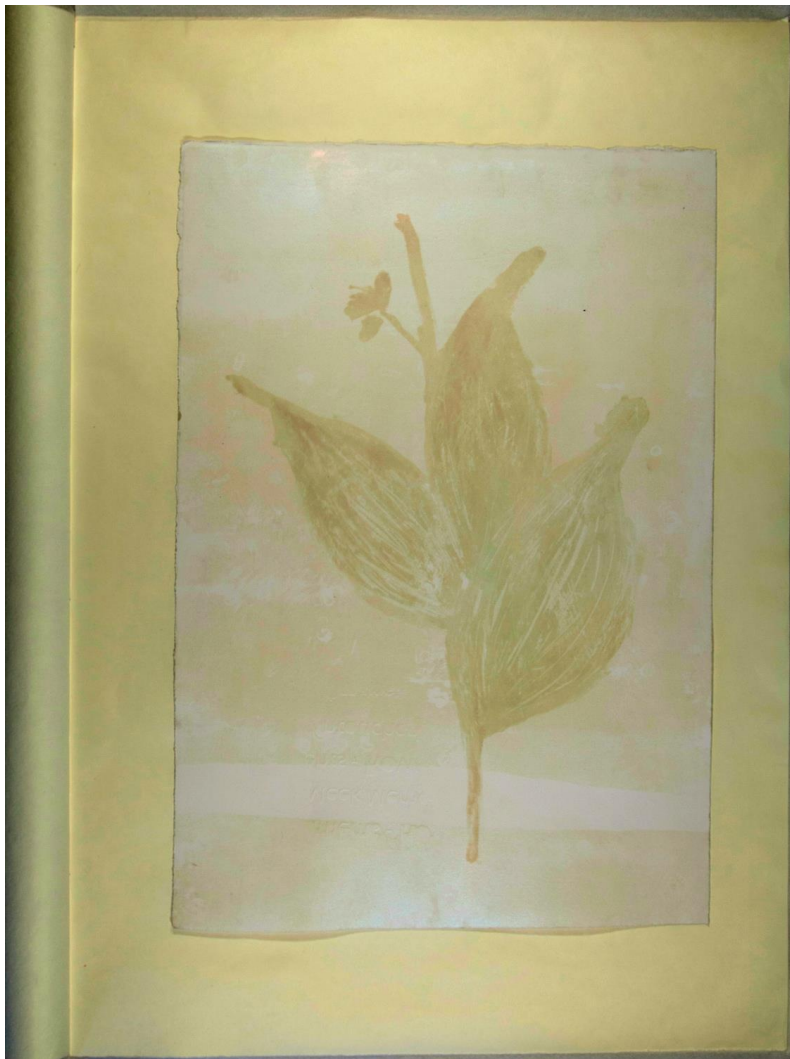


Fig. 33  
Herbarium Book with lithography print  
2016 – 2017  
Photograph: Gerard Dixon

Five of the prints in the Herbarium series have been collated in a book. The book is stitched at the sides using a Japanese binding technique and between the pages transparent Japanese rayon protects and veils each print. There are six pages to the book, but only five of the prints are placed in the book, one between each page, leaving the reverse side and the last page blank, as a reference to Dickinson's dashes. The book is contained in a purpose built craft box alluding to the idea that the *Herbarium* is secretive, as Dickinson was secretive.



## Reflections

As I come to the point of reflection I realize my journey with the poet through her poem has dramatically changed the way I approach my visual language. Along the way, it seemed inevitable that changes would happen, but at times I was unprepared for what did happen next. Changes and challenges are perhaps the best way I can explain the progress of the visual work. Initially I looked for literal meanings in the poem and this was reflected in the series of large prints that were later discarded. I found I wanted to invoke Deleuze's fold, although I could not explain the reason why. This proved difficult as each time I thought I understood what Deleuze meant by the fold, it re-folded into something else. After my journey to San Marco Convent to see Fra Angelico's panels I began to realize that Fra Angelico had alluded to the folds of the sacred space, in a simple but glorious way through the folds of his splattered panels.

While Fra Angelico solved one problem, I continued to struggle with the poet and her poem. Perhaps most profound was the shadow of the figure in the panel. I had found a way to intimate Dickinson and myself, through the splashes; the folds in the panel. The panels brought me to the sacred space, which I found through the stanza, stanze and Dickinson's marks, known as dashes.

As the work progressed I found other ways that I had unconsciously referred to the sacred space; through the floating forms of shimmer of the pearl essence in the Herbarium prints; the torn prints, which have become a mapping of my ideas and the transparent Japanese Mulberry paper stencils that mirror the spaces in the *Banners*. These are all material manifestations of my visual journey to evoke the experience of the sacred space.

## Conclusion

As this investigation comes to a conclusion and I reflect on the journey I took with Dickinson and her poem, I have come to realize that to evoke the 'invisible' through the idea of a sacred space has conjured up many 'im/possibilities'. But 'im/possibilities' have caused the opening of unknown spaces where 'im/probabilities' and new understandings have been discovered and explored. I started with the premise of taking Dickinson's poem as a vehicle to develop a visual language for exploring the issues of religion and mortality and whilst these issues continued to underlie this investigation, I found the language and structure of the poem alluded to something else, a sacred space.

Initially I found there was a need to question the relevance and place of such issues in contemporary western society. When Kristeva refers to the need to believe, she also infers something outside religious belief, which can leave a space, an invisible or a sacred space. Perhaps this is the space that Dickinson has quietly evoked through her poem. For Dickinson her domestic realm was her sacred space where she was able to slip away, taking time for imagining and writing her poetry. Dickinson's realm has inspired me to propose the artist's studio can also be a sacred space of imagining and new discoveries. Sometimes I have referred to the sacred space as the cloistered space as it invokes the idea of a safe place of spiritual and self-awareness. Dickinson also suggests a disquiet manifest between the spaces and the dashes of the poem, which I have also aimed to infer through this body of work. I did not set out to literally illustrate the poem but to explore how this nineteenth-century woman dealt with her own conflicts of belief, mortality and gender and how this could be relevant in a twenty-first century context. This was done through re-connecting with the distant past through Fra Angelico's fictive panels from the fifteenth century, Deleuze's idea of the fold and more recently the ideas of Karen Barad through *New Materialism*.

Deleuze's idea of the Fold with its material and porous qualities is the thread that binds the bodies of work from the burnt holes in the discarded prints, folded and dipped in bees wax to the transparent stencils, clustered and bound. Through Deleuze's fold I have sought to bring a further re-interpretation of the possibilities of process and materials, whilst creating a tangible means to allude to Dickinson's poem and the idea of the sacred space.

Barad's concept of hauntologies, influenced by Deleuze's discussion of the fold, have inspired the re-framing of unintentional ruptures as serendipitous events. Thus new possibilities of re-working the poet's modus operandi have been explored through the fragmentation of text, the use of pearlescent inks and the re-working of the poet's Herbarium. Throughout the project, these serendipitous events have influenced changes in my methods and how I have interacted with my print practice. These events were not linear -where one thing immediately led to another - but more a series of confusing ruptures. Events such as the 'messy text' and the introduction of the laser-cutter allowed me to discard past assumptions and explore 'elsewhere' for ways to make the 'invisible' visible.

This project has been about Dickinson's Poem one hundred and twenty four, *Safe in their Alabaster Chambers*; therefore it has been important for the title to suggest the manner of the investigation. As such it means that the modus operandi of the poet, the contents and structure of the poem are all reflected through the archival naming of the five bodies of work; *the Sample map, Manuscript scrolls, Glass bell dome, Banners and Stencils*.

As I reflect on the process of the work I find there has been a continual tension between process and outcomes as I have constantly questioned how I might use the sacred space to make a contribution to the challenge

of making the 'invisible' visible. Like Dickinson, my experience of the sacred is a quiet and private one and I have evoked my experience of the sacred by using a reduced palette of muted transparent colours, pearlescent inks and cloistered interiors. Inspired by Dickinson's *modus operandi*, I have sought to evoke the conflicted feelings aroused by the poem by contributing to the challenge of how to make the 'invisible' visible through the idea of the sacred space.

I came to this project with the aim to re-imagine the poem and the poet through my eyes and imagination but found much more when I began to infiltrate her sacred space.

## Reference List

- Antreasian, GA, & Clinton 1970, *The Tamarind Book of Lithography: art and techniques*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York.
- Ashton, D, curators: Richard Francis & Dennis Hemming 1977, *Agnes Martin*, Westerham Press, Westerham.
- Barrett, E, Barrett, E & Bolt, B 2014, *Material Inventions: applying creative arts research*, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2014, London.
- Barrett, E & Bolt, BD 2007, *Practice as Research: approaches to creative arts enquiry*, London.
- Bennett, J 2010, *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, London.
- Hanks, P (ed.) 1987, *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, Glasgow.
- Colebrook, C & Buchanan I 2000, *Deleuze and feminist theory / edited by Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.
- Croft, P 2003, *Plate Lithography*, A & C Black Publishers, London.
- Crumlin, R & Woodward, M 1998, *Beyond belief: modern art and the religious imagination / Rosemary Crumlin; catalogue research and*

*collaboration*, Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria.

Dean, T, Fer, B, & Undedörfer (ed), 2013, *Roni Horn: 153 drawings*, Hauser & Wirth, Zurich.

Deleuze, G 1993, forward and translation by Tom Conley, *The Fold Leibniz and the Baroque*, The Athlone Press, London.

Dickinson, E 1981, *The manuscript books of Emily Dickinson*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Dickinson, E 1999, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson Reading Edition*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Didi-Huberman, G 1995, *Fra Angelico: dissemblance & figuration*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Doggett, S 1998, *Bookworks*, Apple Tree Press, London.

Fer, B 2004, *The infinite line: re-making art after modernism*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Fletcher, J & Benjamin, AE 1990, *Abjection, melancholia, and love: the work of Julia Kristeva / edited by John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin*, Warwick studies in philosophy and literature, London: Routledge.

Franklin RW (ed.) 1998, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Variorum Edition, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Freedman, L 2011, *Emily Dickinson and the Religious Imagination*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Gelpi, F 2008, 'Emily Dickinson's Long Shadow: Susan Howe & Fanny Howe', *The Emily Dickinson Journal*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 100 – 112.

Gilbert, SM 1996, 'The Wayward Nun beneath the Hill Emily Dickinson and the mysteries of womanhood', in J Farr (ed.), *Emily Dickinson A collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, pp. 21 -39.

Harrison, C & Wood, P 1993, *Art in Theory 1900 – 2000; an anthology of changing ideas*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, USA, p 580 – 2, 1134 – 6.

Grabowski, BF, B 2009, *Printmaking: a complete guide to materials and processes*, Laurence King Publishing Ltd, London.

Herkenhoff, P February - March 2003, 'Roni Horn: Dessins / Drawings  
What is drawing for Roni Horn? *Centre Pompidou*, Paris

Hood, W 1993, *Fra Angelico at San Marco / William Hood*, Yale University Press, London.

Horn, R 1993, *Rare Spellings Selected Drawings Zeichnungen 1985 - 1992*, Dieter Schwartz, Kunstmuseum, Winterthur.

Horn, R 2013, *Roni Horn: 153 drawings (texts; Briony Fer and Tacita Dean)*, Hauser & Wirth, Zurich.

Horn, R, Spector, N & Horn, R 1994, *Roni Horn: Being Double*, Tilburg: De Pont.

Howe, S 1985, *My Emily Dickinson*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley.

Johnson, TH 1970, *Emily Dickinson; the complete poems*, Faber and Faber, London.

Julia, K 2009, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, Columbia University Press, New York.

Karana, E, Pedgley, O, & Rognoli, V, 2014, *Materials Experience: fundamentals of materials and design*, Elsevier (Butterworth-Heinemann) Oxford.

Leonard, Z 2006, *A Wild Patience*, Agnes Martin, Yale University Press, Dia Art Foundation, (eds. Cooke L et al).

Lovett, A 2015, *In Pursuit of the Neutral: Agnes Martin's Shimmering Line*, Agnes martin, Tate Publishing, London.

Martin, A 2005, *Agnes Martin Writings*, Hatje Cantz Verlag Ostfildern - Ruit, Germany.



Martin, A 2015, *Who's afraid of triangles?* Tate Publishing, London.

Masako, T 2013, 'Emily Dickinson and the Japanese Aesthetics', *The Emily Dickinson Journal*, vol. 22, no. No. 2, p. 20.

Matilsky, B 2011, *Lesley Dill's Poetic Visions; from shimmer to Sister Gertrude Morgan*, Whatcom Museum, Bellingham, Washington.

Middlemost, T 2009, *Mono Uno*, Blue Star Print, ACT.

Morris, F, Bell, Tiffany 2015, *Agnes Martin*, Tate Publishing, London.

Morris, LA 2006, *Emily Dickinson's Herbarium; a facsimile edition*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Nancy, J-L 1996, in *Deleuze: a critical reader*, ed. Patton Paul  
Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.

Newell, J & Whittington D 2008, *Monoprinting*, A & C Black Publishing, London.

Paglia, C 1990, *Sexual Personae: art and decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*, Yale University Press, London.

Palhares, T 2015, *Mira Schendel Monotypes*, Hauser & Wirth, London.

Princethal, N 2015, *Agnes Martin: her life and art*, Thames and Hudson, London.

Schön, DA 1983, *The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action*, Temple Smith, London.

Skull, J. 1988, *Key Terms in Art, Craft and design*, Elbrook Press, Adelaide.

Sullivan, G 2010, *Art Practice as Research: inquiry in visual arts*, 2nd Edition, Sage Publications, Los Angeles.

van der Tuin, I 2014, 'The Mode of Invention of Creative Research: Onto - Epistemology.', in EB Barrett, E (ed.), *Material Inventions: applying creative arts research*, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London, pp. 257 - 272.

Vendler, H 2010, *Dickinson selected poems and commentaries*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Werner, M, Bervin, J & Howe, S 2013, *The Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson's Envelope Poems*, Christine Burgin/New Directions Books, New York.

## Journal and Online Articles

Allen, E 2012, 'Visible Earshot': The Returning Voice of Susan Howe', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, vol. 2012, 41, no. 4, pp. 397 – 421, viewed 13<sup>th</sup> February 2014,  
(<https://academioupcom.ezproxy.utas.edu.au/camqtly/issue/41/4>).

Barad, K 2010, 'Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, Space Time Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come', *Derrida Today*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 240-268, viewed 10<sup>th</sup> October 2015  
(<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.utas.edu.au>).

Barbour, J 2007, *John Barbour. [video recording (DVD)]*, Art forum: August 17, 2007.

Birkhofer, D 2010, 'Eva Hesse and Mira Schendel; Voiding the Body - Embodying the Void', *Woman's Art Journal*, vol. Vol. 31, no. No. 2, pp. 3 – 11, viewed 15<sup>th</sup> November 2015,  
(<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41331079>).

Bray, P 1992, 'Emily Dickinson as visionary', *Raritan*, vol. 12, no.1, pp. 113- 137, viewed 13<sup>th</sup> February 2014,  
(<http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.utas.edu.au/ehost/>).

Butler, R & Patton P *Dossier on Gilles Deleuze, Agenda: Contemporary Art Magazine*, no. 33, pp. 16-36, viewed 13<sup>th</sup> February 2014,  
([http://encore.lib.utas.edu.au/iii/encore/search/C\\_\\_SAgenda](http://encore.lib.utas.edu.au/iii/encore/search/C__SAgenda)).

Colebrook, C 2010, *Deleuze [electronic resource]*, Guides for the Perplexed, London: Continuum International Publishing, 2010.

Cotter, H 1998, 'Agnes Martin', *Art Journal*, vol. 56, no. 3, pp. 77 – 80, viewed 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015, (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/777974>).

Davey, N, October - December 2000, 'Writing and the in-between', 378 – 386 *Word & Image*, published online 29 May 2012, vol. 16, no. No. 4, p. 9, (<http://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.utas.edu.au>).

Dolphijn, R & van der Tuin, I, 2012, *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, Open Humanities Press - University of Michigan Library, Anne Arbor, Michigan, viewed 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015, (<http://openhumanitiespress.org/Dolphijn%20and%20van%20der%20Tuin%20%20New%20>).

Heisler, E 2002, 'Roni Horn and Emily Dickinson: The Poem as Place', *Women's Studies*, vol. 31, no. 6, p. 759.

Heartney, E 2003, 'Thinking Through the Body: Women Artists and the Catholic Imagination', *Hypatia*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 3-22, viewed 05<sup>th</sup> March 2011, (Project Muse: <http://muse.jhu.edu>).

Herkenhoff, P, 'Roni Horn: *Dessins/Drawings* What is drawing for Roni Horn? *Centre Pompidou*, Galerie D'Art Graphique, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2003 – 5<sup>th</sup> January 2004.

Jasper, A 2013, 'Feminism, religion and this incredible need to believe: Working with Julia Kristeva again', *Feminist Theology*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 279-294, viewed 26<sup>th</sup> June 2014, (<http://fth.sagepub.com/>).

Jestice Makrandi, N 2009, Vision, Touch, Voice, viewed 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015, ([http://www.academia.edu/5984284/Vision\\_Touch\\_Voice\\_The\\_Work\\_of\\_Lesley\\_Dill](http://www.academia.edu/5984284/Vision_Touch_Voice_The_Work_of_Lesley_Dill)).

Mays, JB 2005, 'Remembering Agnes Martin 1912 - 2004', *Canadian Art*, vol. Summer 2005, 22, no. 2, pp. 104 – 106, viewed 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.utas.edu.au/ehost/>.

Rondeau, J 2008, *Works by Roni Horn* no. 1, p. 46, via edsjsr (EBSCOhost), (<https://login.ezproxy.utas.edu.au/10.2307.20205581>).

Schiff, K 2012, Agnes Martin, under new auspices, 121 - 125', *Art Journal*, vol. 71, no. 3, p. 121 – 125, viewed 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015, (<http://search.proquest.com/docview.1288088777>).

Smith, K, *Sampler*, viewed 06<sup>th</sup> February 2014 (<http://www.orionpress.com/catalog/081.htm>2007).

Smyth, J 1988, 'A Review of Donald Schon's The Reflective Practitioner:

How Professionals Think in Action,' *Studies in Continuing Education*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 164-171.

Tuttle, R Fall 2002, 'What Does One Look at in an Agnes Martin Painting? Nine Musings on the Occasion of her Ninetieth Birthday', *American Art*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 92 – 95, viewed 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015, (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3109427>).

### **Other Related Sources**

Bloom, H 1994, *The Western Canon*, Harcourt Brace, Fort Worth, Texas.

Boundas, CV & Olkowski, D 1994, *Gilles Deleuze and the theater of philosophy / edited by Constantin V. Boundas & Dorothea Olkowski*, Routledge, New York.

Bunbury, A 2013, *Bea Maddock*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria.

Cameron, D, Coetzee, JM, Christov-Bakargiev, C & Kentridge, W 1999, *William Kentridge*, Contemporary artists, Phaidon Press, London.

Carter, A 2014, *The Bloody Chamber and other stories*, Vintage Books, London.

Deppman, J 2008, *Trying to think with Emily Dickinson*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst and Boston.

Dimakopoulou, S 2006, 'Remapping the Affinities between the Baroque

and the Postmodern: The Folds of Melancholy & the Melancholy of the Fold', vol. 4.1, no. 11, p. 10, viewed 09 February 2014  
<http://erec.revues.org/415>.

Easton, EW 1989, *The intimate interiors of Edouard Vuillard / Elizabeth Wynne Easton*, Thames and Hudson, London.

Elkins, J & Morgan, 2009, *Re-Enchantment*, Routledge, New York.

Erickson, B & Xu, B 2001, *The art of Xu Bing: words without meaning, meaning without words / Britta Erickson*, Asian art and culture, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution: University of Washington Press, Seattle.

Flieger, JA 2000, 'Becoming - Woman: Deleuze, Schreber and Molecular Identification', *Deleuze and Feminist theory*, eds Buchanan, I & Colebrook, C Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Francis, R 1996, *Negotiating Rapture*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Guillaud, J & Guillaud, M 1986, *Fra Angelico: the light of the soul: painting panels and frescoes from the Convent of San Marco, Florence*, Guillaud Editions, Paris.

Habegger, A 2002, *My Wars are Laid away in Books; the life of Emily Dickinson*, The Modern Library, New York.

Hart, D & Butler, R 2016, 'Bea Maddock', *Artonview*, no. 86, pp. 18-18.

Harvey, ED 1985, 'Tongues of Glaciers: Sedimenting Language in Roni Horn's Vatnasafn/Library of Water and Anne Carson's 'Wildly Constant'', *Word & image*.

Hesse, E & Serota, N 1979, *Eva Hesse: sculpture*, (catalog of an exhibition held at Whitechapel Art Gallery, Rijksmuseum Kroller-Muller), *Kestner-Gesellschaft / edited by Nicholas Serota*, London.

Justaert, K 2012, *Theology after Deleuze*, Continuum International Publishing, New York.

Krauss, RE 1993, *The optical unconscious*, MIT Press, Cambridge.

Maddock, B 1991, *Being and Nothingness: Bea Maddock*, Imprint for The Australian National Gallery, Canberra.

Maddock, B 1991, *Being and Nothingness: Bea Maddock*, Imprint for The Australian National Gallery, Canberra, ACT.

Malt, J 2013, 'Leaving traces: Surface contact in Ponge, Penone and Alÿs', *Word & Image*, vol. Vol. 29, no. No. 1.

Matin-Chew, L & Watson, J 2009, *blood language*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, Victoria.

Nabokov, VV 1993, *Transparent things / Vladimir Nabokov*, Penguin



Books, London.

Nygren, B 2009, "'Preferring to Frequent the Doors of Churches": Iconography, Observance, and Viewer Involvement in a Predella Panel by Fra Angelico', *Southeastern College Art Conference Review*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 408-419.

Olsen, R 2008, 'Strategies of Critical Practice: Recent writing on experimental and innovative poetry by women, a review essay', *Signs*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 371 – 387, viewed 16/11/201, (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/521559>).

O'Sullivan, S 2006, *Art encounters Deleuze and Guattari: thought beyond representation*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Perkins Gilman, C 2000, *The Yellow wall- paper and other writings*, Random House, New York.

Perry, G February 2009, 'Watery Weather, Vatnasfn/Library of Water', *Art History*, vol. 32, no. No 1, pp. 177 - 219.

Pope-Hennessy, JW 1974, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) *Fra Angelico*, Cornell University Press, New York.

Ross, WNM 1997, *Spirit and Place*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, NSW.

Sage, L 1999, *The Cambridge guide to Women's writing in English*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Smart, S, McDonald, H, & Kent, R 1999, *Sally Smart: the unhomely body series: femmage, shadows and symptoms series*, Melbourne, Victoria.

Taubman, M & John, G 1988, *Gwen John / Mary Taubman*, Wildwood House, Aldershot, Hampshire England.

Thomas, D 2016, 'Bea Maddock 1934 - 2016', *Art Monthly Australasia*, no. 290, pp. 72-72. Viewed 06<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

Todd, ML (ed) 2003, *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, first published by the World Publishing Company, Cleveland, in 1951, Dover Publications, Inc., New York.

## Glossary

## Alabaster

1. A fine-grained usually white, opaque or translucent variety of gypsum used for statues, vases etc. 2. A variety of hard semitranslucent calcite, often banded like marble.

(Collins English Dictionary 1987, p. 33)

## Fascicle

1. (n) a bundle or cluster of branches, leaves etc. 2. Also called: fasciculus. Anatomy a small bundle of fibres esp. nerve fibres.

One of the divisions of a book published in parts.

Fascicule (n) one part of a printed book that is published in small instalments.

(Collins English Dictionary 1987, p. 551)

## Firmament

(n) Is the expanse of the sky, heavens. From the Latin firmāmentum sky (considered to be fixed above the earth).

(Collins English Dictionary 1987, p. 571)

## Fold

(vb) to bend or be bent double so that one part covers another: to fold a sheet of paper. 2. To enclose in or as if in a surrounding material. (n) Church or the members of it.

(suffix) having so many parts, being so many times as much or as many, or multiplied by so much or so many: three fold, three-hundred fold. (Old English)

(Collins English Dictionary 1987, p. 588)

## Deleuze, *The Fold*

...the fold is always between two folds, and ... the between-two-folds seems to move about everywhere...between bodies and souls in general.

(G. Deleuze, 1993, p. 11)

### Lithography

From the Greek words *lithos* meaning *stone* and *graphe* meaning *writing*. Literally meaning writing on stone. The process was invented by Alois Senefelder in 1796.

(J. Skull, 1988, p. 124)

### Mono print (monotype)

From the Greek *monos* meaning *alone* or *single* and print from the Old French *prieunte* meaning *something pressed*. A mono print is a simple printing technique where one print at a time is made and every print is different (as distinct from an edition of prints).

(J. Skull, 1988, p. 124)

### Sacred

(adj.) 1. Exclusively devoted to a deity or to some religious ceremony or used; holy; consecrated. 2. Worthy of, or regarded with reverence, awe or respect; from the Latin *sacāre* to set apart as holy, from *sacer* holy.

(Collins English Dictionary 1987, p. 1342)

### Stanza

(n) 1. A fixed number of verse lines arranged in a definite metrical pattern, forming a unit of a poem. From the Italian: halting place from Vulgar Latin *stantia* or *stanze* (unattested) station from Latin *stare* to stand.

(Collins English Dictionary 1987, p. 1487)



